





# FAMILY FAILINGS.

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A NOVEL

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## CHAPTER I.

FREDERICK KEANE was left alone in town ; the Trevors were gone to Brighton—but not before he had made another attempt to make Blanche understand, that for once in his life he really did mean something!—in this he actually could not succeed, and finding she would neither believe or understand him, and thoroughly frightened at the clever way in which she laughed off his little at-

tempts at a proposal, he was obliged to desist from all further endeavours to win such a formidable wife ; and Blanche left London without having been obliged to refuse, though she had in point of fact rejected, the handsome and silly Fred.

Horace was at the Leigh, the Trevors gone, and he was alone in London—and very dull it was—he took long walks alone—he dined, breakfasted and sat alone; it was quite wretched ; so in despair he made a round of visits to see if any soul he knew was still in town.

To his delight he found the Walgraves were in Cavendish Square, and found himself a welcome guest.

Gradually, for sometime past, Horace had been getting tired of Fred's inanities; he saw too much of him, and day by day, surely but slowly, there had been springing up an impatience of one another's society; they still cared each for the other perhaps as much as ever, but now they felt more at their ease apart—their paths were so different

it became hardly possible for them to tread them together.

These gradual estrangements will occur amongst friends and lovers, between parents and children, husband and wife; one by one a chain of trifles, linked one with another, of no importance by themselves, of fatal consequence when all added up together; little neglects—slight impatiences of word or even of gesture, change in the circumstances or mind of one, or perhaps of both—mere bodily indisposition—annoyances from others—all these things going on for months or years will divide those who once could have been parted by nothing but death! What wonder then that, by degrees, they had estranged characters so totally opposite as Fred and Horace; the marvel was they ever had been friends.

Frederick was the one who felt this the most; for he had nothing else to think about! his wishing to offer to Blanche was a mere impulse occasioned by a longing for change of some sort; he could not imagine

what made him so courageous, and felt very glad she had *not* understood him—he was never at his ease in her society ; she was so late very incomprehensible—he had felt often of that there was an under current in the conversations at Mrs. Trevor's which was a mystery to him, they were always alluding to this, that, and the other, of which he knew nothing ; quoting in this language, or joking in that ; “after all they were too clever”—there could be no doubt of it—for him—he knew and felt, that half the time they were laughing at him.

Horace and Blanche were in truth so convinced that he never understood anything but the commonest matters, that they carried their conviction too far, and were often, though unintentionally, almost unkind—they had unwittingly made Fred feel his inferiority too much ;—and they were now about to reap the fruits of it.

With all these pettish feelings fully upon his mind, feeling neglected, laughed at, *snubbed*, did Frederick Keane become in-

timate with the Walgraves ;—Sir Josiah was earnest in his invitations, Lady Walgrave quite maternal in her behaviour, the girls were very kind and gentle, and Fred felt happier amongst them than he had done for months.

When he sat with Blanche at her frame she quizzed him ; when he sat with Isabelle and Louisa, they worked and listened. By dint of borrowing a few of the opinions he had heard Horace express, at any of which Isabelle, who instantly recognised them, invariably looked up at him with a smile, Fred gained for himself a reputation for wit and acuteness, which was not particularly deserved ; and he really was so handsome, and so very gentlemanly in every way, that he was a great acquisition to their usually silent family circle.

He was not made to feel his inferiority *there*. He liked Louisa, and he liked Isabelle—and he had not an idea which he liked best.

“ Sweet creatures both : and not too clever either.”

Sometimes when he had nothing to say, which would occur now and then, he used to read or quote some of Horace Leigh’s last letter ; and as Isabelle’s soft brown eyes would fix themselves upon him *then*, with a very sweet and touching expression, he could not help finding out that they very beautiful ; from that he soon discovered that she was by far the most lovely of the sisters ; and then he began to wonder what he should do when they went out of Town.

One day he came in, as usual, after luncheon.

“ I have sad news of Horace,” said Fred, with a long face.

Isabelle looked up with such an eager and enquiring expression that even Fred felt he must answer the enquiry of her look.

“ His father’s dead !” said he.

Isabelle gave a sigh of deep relief, and could not help exclaiming—

“ Is that all ?”

"Did you think *he* was dead himself?" laughed Fred, meaning to be very amusing.

"I did, indeed," said Isabelle, turning pale at the bare idea.

"How very ridiculous!" said Fred.

"Very, indeed!" answered the lady, wondering what he meant.

"His father's dead—so I hope he'll soon be back in Town."

"His father dead!" said Isabelle, unconsciously speaking aloud.

"I told you so just now," said Fred, raising his eyebrows, and opening his eyes, in a way peculiar to himself.

But she did not hear him : she was bending low over her work, thinking and marvelling if this event would make a difference—would enable him to marry ! She had a vague idea that fathers always left their children something when they died—and so, surely, he might come forward now.

She colored deeply as she thought of this—and Frederick looked away ; he fancied

she was blushing because he was gazing at her.

“ Poor fellow ! ” went on his friend—“ poor, dear old Horace ! he has been just head nurse ! I wonder at him, don’t you, Miss Isabelle ? ”

“ Oh—I ? —yes—no,” said she ; “ he seems very good-natured ! ” scarcely knowing what she said, for the idea of Horace, sorrowful and unhappy, occupied her mind entirely.

“ Not so very good-natured,” said Fred, in an oracular voice, shaking his head, and looking as if he knew better.

“ I agree with you, Mr. Keane,” said Louisa, nodding at him over her work-frame ; “ I have seen Mr. Leigh in a very bad humour,” and she remembered the day when she had called upon the Trevors with her mother instead of Isabelle.

“ If Horace was only as good-tempered as he is clever; he would be perfection ! ” continued Fred, in an enthusiastic tone.

Isabelle looked brightly up at him ; he

caught her look, and fancying it was meant for himself, returned it with interest—in more ways than one.

“I suppose now,” continued he, (*merely by way of saying something*, aiming a blow at all the fondest hopes of the young girl he spoke to)—“I suppose now, that Horace will be marrying Miss Trevor ; they would not speak to me at High Elms—they were so taken up with one another;” and he felt quite cross at the remembrance.

“Do you think that really likely?” asked Isabelle, in a low voice, bending over her work.

“Sure of it,” said Fred, picking up her scissars. “What a way these things have of falling down,” said he, trying to put his fingers into the rings intended only for the slighter ones of a lady—“they seem to me to do nothing else!” and at that wise observation he laughed, and Isabelle laughed too ; although he had given her a shock she never could recover ; she thought that he *must know*, or he never could speak so decidedly.

"I don't think I shall agree to live with Horace Leigh, another year," said Fred, giving himself airs before his fair young friends ; " besides if he marries his cousin, our joint house will fall to the ground !" and he passed his fingers through his hair, fancying he had said something good.

Louisa who thought him very handsome looked up, and smiled, (at his looking so conceited) so he was confirmed in the idea that he was witty !

He felt, that in that house, he was admired and appreciated, and that raised his spirits to such a childish height he did not care what he said, he felt so sure they would not laugh at him !

" And so you really think ?" asked Isabelle, wishing to know the worst.

" Decidedly," said Fred ; " before six months, Horace will marry his dear Blanche, what else should make her snub—other people," continued he, coloring up.

" I thought," said Louisa, laughing ;

" that you were a desperate admirer, yourself, of Blanche."

" It is not *Miss Trevor*, that I admire," answered Fred, in a sentimental tone, looking first at one, and then at the other—not knowing in the least, which he admired most!

" Who then ?" asked Isabelle, in the most innocent manner.

" Time will show," said Fred.

" Good gracious, how mysterious!"

" Pray let us be the first people, to hear the news," answered Louisa.

" You are likely to be the first people to hear it, if there is any news," said Keane, with such a marked emphasis, that they thought it best to ask no more.

But deep was the impression, made upon Isabelle Walgrave, by the speech Frederick had made—because he had nothing else to say.

A few days after this conversation, he found the girls, in a great state of excitement, and enquired the cause.

"We have some news for you, this time," said Louisa ; "Papa has been, for two or three weeks, trying to let our poor dear place down in the country, and—now he has succeeded ; let it for three years, and we shan't even see it again : Mama is going down, to pack up ; and Papa says he shall go abroad."

"I am very sorry not to see the garden, once again," said Isabelle, with a sigh ; "but I should not mind living in London.

Fred took this, as a personal compliment ; he was made so much of at the Walgraves that he was getting quite conceited, "Isabelle most certainly was thinking of *him*."

"*I* wish you were going to be always in town," said Fred, looking in an earnest and devoted manner at Isabelle ; "you won't like going abroad."

"Why not ?" asked Louisa in surprise ; "every body does."

"So much trouble to go !" said Fred ; "then all those tiresome languages—that

tower of Babel business, was a great nuisance! why can't every body speak the same language—I never mean to go abroad—I should feel quite foolish, if I didn't understand what people said."

Isabelle, who had heard Horace hint, that Fred's powers of comprehension, were by no means miraculously great, could not help laughing at this.

Fred thought that *she* at all events appreciated his wit, though Blanche did not; he began to be very much in love.

He was not asked to dinner that day, so he had time to think—after his own peculiar fashion.

"What should he do without the Walgraves? he didn't know; he was sure he couldn't tell:—there seemed no chance of Horace yet—and if the Walgraves went abroad, where on earth, was he to go and sit of a morning?"

"What a bore it was, that they were going away, just when he had become so intimate with them—that beautiful Isabelle,

she certainly was very kind to him—perhaps she liked him ?” (he was certainly growing conceited.) “ Horace never flattered any one—and Horace said he was a good-looking fellow !”

Fred smiled at this remembrance, and a fortnight or three weeks from that day he wrote to Horace the news of his engagement.

It was no less strange than true, that attached as Isabelle Walgrave had been to Horace she had consented to be the wife of his friend ; and what was quite as unaccountable, Sir Josiah, who had been known to refuse more than one more wealthy suitor, as not sufficiently rich, had consented to allow his favourite daughter to marry a man who had very little now and nothing in prospect.

Poor innocent, amiable Fred had not the slightest idea, that in seeking his own happiness, he was wrecking that of Horace Leigh; nothing would have induced him to interfere with his wishes in the smallest

matter, much less in one so important; he had not the smallest glimmering of the fact that he was robbing the friend he loved so dearly ; of the object of his affections.

Horace had never given him the slightest idea of his attachment, indeed, had taken some little pains to blind him—very little were required, for Fred, if left entirely to his own unassisted sagacity—never saw anything.—Horace began bitterly to regret not having made him acquainted with the attachment that had so long existed, but it was now too late.—The sole and simple reason why Frederick Keane had fallen in love and was going to be married was, that he had nothing else to do.

The reasons for which he was accepted were far more numerous and important; and many circumstances, over which Isabelle herself had no controul whatever, had combined to make her take such a step. If Mr. Simmons had never been introduced to Sir Josiah—she would most certainly have married Horace.—Upon such apparently indif-

ferent and unconnected circumstances do our fates in reality depend.—Something is said or done, or written miles off by people who have never even heard of us; and yet the happiness of our whole lives is made or marred by it, the letter Mr. Murdoch wrote on business, destroyed the hopes of Horace Leigh.

But we must return to the Villa in which events are taking place, very important to the Walgraves and to Fred.

Poor Mrs. Simmons had some reason to tremble and turn pale whilst acting as her husband's secretary, and answering those letters upon business—they were one and all of an unpleasant nature ; the first she had to enclose to Sir Josiah, was the extinguisher of many reasonable and sanguine hopes ; the friends, good and true, influential and in earnest as they were, who had long been endeavouring to gain the patronage of government for one branch of the invention, and had fully expected it would have been adopted at once in many public establish-

ments, had written now to state their sorrow and their disappointment, that every attempt of theirs had fully and entirely—failed...Government is always slow to give its powerful aid to such inventions, and in this case there was no hope whatever.

This was a great and unexpected blow, and it was with feelings of bitter mortification that Mr. Simmons sent to Sir Josiah these proofs of present disappointment...these earnests of future loss...their main-stay was gone...whatever had gone wrong, whatever melted within their grasp there had always hitherto been this hope in prospect; this certainty of retrieving all....Now it was gone.

There were complaints from their manufacturer, that things were at a stand still for want of money...there were bills to a heavy amount becoming due.

And Mr. Simmons ill he as he was, had to endeavour to raise the money to meet them...this was no easy matter.

The letters poor Mrs. Simmons had to

wrote opened her eyes to much of which she had been in ignorance, and with painful anxiety the suffering husband and his patient wife waited the answers.

Mr. Simmons found he could not raise the money ; and yet before his eyes was lying the notice of the bill due that day week.

And for five thousand pounds ! it was but one of many.

He must apply to Sir Josiah ; they had hitherto—apparently, at least—shared the expenses of the concern. Now the time had arrived when the man of capital must stand in the gap.

Mr. Simmons roused himself, ill as he was, to leave his invalid couch, and go into the City ; he had so much to do ; he was more deeply and seriously involved than any one was aware of ; but he was more unfortunate than dishonorable ; he had no wish to drag the worthy baronet down with him—he wished to avert this evil—if he could.

The confidence of Sir Josiah in Mr. Simmons had been considerably and reasonably

shaken, by the matter of the dishonoured draft; and he had been looking anxiously into the affairs of the concern. They were bad—very bad; terrible expenses, and no sales-- but government!—when government patronised them, all would be well.

He was indulging in this sanguine frame of mind, which was natural to him, and very independent in general, of circumstances; when he received the terrible news that all hope of the invention being adopted by government for any public works was at an end. He could hardly believe that anything so ruinous could be true. With the unlucky confidence of two enthusiasts, who could encourage one another, they had provided for the demand they expected—and it had failed. It was this circumstance which obliged Sir Josiah to remain in Town. Then there was the bill for nearly five thousand pounds: who was to meet that! Mr. Simmons could not—and Sir Josiah must; it was in his bond, that he, as the richer man, was to stand in the gap.

When he received the tidings from his coadjutor, that, ill as he was, he had proceeded to the City—embarrassed as he was, he had tried to raise the money by the time required—without success: Sir Josiah felt he had embarked upon no summer sea. He paid the money when it was due; and this was the circumstance which induced him to wish to let his house; for which he began to negotiate very soon after Horace was summoned to the Leigh.

It was very painful to the country gentleman to find that the speculation he had entered upon, in such a hopeful spirit, had ended in obliging him to let his old ancestral home—an humiliation to which neither he or his predecessors had ever been exposed before; The Grove was for a term no longer his; this was the first fruits of his love of mechanics, and his regard for Mr. Simmons.

No day now failed to bring its outlay and its vexation to the unlucky baronet.

The visit into the City, before he was well recovered, had occasioned a relapse;

and poor Mr. Simmons had again to spend some of the burning summer days a prisoner to his room.

He lay there in silence : no sound reaching him but the hum of the insects in the garden below ; knowing that he was watched by his attached and anxious wife, who would not, however, interrupt his thoughts by her actual presence, having learnt that the reveries of genius require solitude ; and having found his silent hours of consideration had often changed the aspect of things to sunshine, even when they were apparently at the worst.

The enthusiast's sunken cheek was very pale, and his eyes were sad and dim, as he remembered, in his enforced inaction, all the embarrassments that were crowding upon him. He had an honorable mind—*he knew* that what he said he had believed ; and yet he feared, dreaded, with a sensation of shame and sorrow, that Sir Josiah, who he now saw must be the victim to their disappointed hopes, should think he had deceived—en-

veigled—cheated him. He knew it must be his impression, but he also knew that it would be unjust.

Mr. Simmons covered his face with his hands. He was a gentleman by birth and feeling, he had encountered sorrow, disappointment, poverty—but he had never yet encountered shame ; and that, though undeserved, he felt might be his portion.

## CHAPTER II.

AFTER a while the pale face of the enthusiast lighted up with a sudden and genial glow ; his dreamy eyes flashed and sparkled—he sat upright ; he felt no longer pain, or illness ; his weakness seemed to leave him ; he sprang off his couch, and paced the room with a proud step, his fertile and elastic mind had found a remedy to all these evils...his genius had not yet deserted him.

He called his wife, and bade her summon

Sir Josiah to come and talk the matter at the Villa ; he could not go to town.—She was his secretary, and looked up to him as a superior being ; ever ready, ever patient, ever unobtrusive, she was a pattern wife, and he well knew her value.

They sat side by side at the open window, and he poured forth his newly recovered hopes to her she did not always understand him, true : but then she always admired him.

Sir Josiah came, there was a heavy cloud of sorrow and anger on his brow when he arrived, and he felt inclined to utter harsh and painful truths ; but when he met the confident look, and really honest smile of the man whose powers of mind he could not doubt ; his anger gradually vanished, and when he had heard him to an end...Sir Josiah rose from his seat and grasped the hand of his coadjutor in great delight—the plan was admirable, it must succeed.—And merely at the expense of several thousands more which Sir Josiah, who could ill afford

it now, was to furnish immediately; all the disadvantages they laboured under would be done away—the sacrifice would be more than repaid.

With great personal exertion, and an interest as great as if he were not working for his own total ruin, the infatuated Baronet raised and paid the very large sums required, and then he rested on his oars for a short time—Mr. Simmons had recovered—was at his post, and all was well.

The embarrassments in which Sir Josiah was personally engaged, and the sums he had actually spent were only part of the liabilities of Mr. Simmons; he was engaged to a greater extent than he himself was aware of, in a still more unfortunate concern; furnishing science to the lower order of mechanists, he was ignorant in matters of more common knowledge, and often at the mercy of his men of business. One house with which he was deeply engaged had at its head a man without principle or honesty—

he had taken every advantage of Mr. Simmons—had gained his signature in a most swindling and disgraceful manner, and the unfortunate enthusiast found himself, not only a large loser, but by the machinations of the man who had pretended to be his friend, deeply responsible.

This thunderbolt fell at the feet of Sir Josiah when he was in the highest spirits, he was shocked and frightened, sorry for Simmons, but not yet aware that it would affect himself, except by depriving him of the pecuniary assistance of Simmons, of which in future he had entertained little or no expectation :

“ MY DEAR SIR JOSIAH,

“ I am in despair. Swindled into a connection, far closer than I was aware of, with the House of Robbs, Sanderson & Co.,—my liabilities are frightful—I must fly the country ; but the bitterest drop in the

whole cup is the fact, that I fear you also will, through me, become their victim.

“ Yours truly

“ SIMMONS.”

Why what does the confounded fellow mean, thought Sir Josiah aloud, what can I have to do with Robbs and Co. But on consideration he thought it might be better to consult his lawyer on the matter, and he proceeded to his Chambers at once.

His prudent Attorney did not like the aspect of affairs, and instantly proposed taking the opinion of Mr. ——, no other than the staunch friend of Horace Leigh.

To his great horror Sir Josiah found that if he had agreed and bound himself to share the profits of Mr. Simmons, he had also bound himself, hand and foot, to share his losses—he was in fact his partner.

The papers he had signed, which would

have settled this question, could not be found so there was nothing for it, but to go abroad till something more was known and settled.

In the meantime Frederick Keane had offered to Lady Walgrave, for her daughter Isabelle. She was astonished—she always thought he had preferred Louisa, she thought that Mr. Leigh, his friend, admired Isabelle, but she had long been indignant with Horace for not having proposed before, and really wished one of her girls would marry somebody, soon !

Isabelle would have refused him without a moment's hesitation, but at her mother's positive command she asked for time to think of it.

When Lady Walgrave told Sir Josiah of Mr. Keane's proposal, he gave a bitter sigh, and said,

“ I hoped she would have married Leigh.”

“ *That* has been hopeless for some time;” said Lady Walgrave, “ he has behaved very ill I think, he never can intend to marry her or Mr. Keane would know it—he declares

he is engaged, or something very like it to Miss Trevor."

Sir Josiah almost groaned.

" You know my dear I do not, *did* not, that is to say, wish to get rid of either of my girls—but I have been unfortunate in money matters lately, we shall have to retrench, my dear, and now it would be a pity if either of them were to refuse a proper match—such is the state of my affairs, that the sooner they are married now, the better for *them* poor things."

" What do you mean ?" asked Lady Walgrave in alarm.

" You are a good woman, and a good manager my dear, but women cannot understand these things, and you must be content to know, that I have sent large sums of money to recover others that are lost—if that last stake should fail, I am a ruined man. Would I have let the Grove without a cause ! I will hope for the best, but it is all or nothing with us now, so do not let the

girls refuse an eligible man, if they can like him."

He was afraid to trust himself to say another word, he loved his daughters very dearly ; indeed with a more than commonplace affection, and the idea that he had, by following his favorite fancies, endangered their happiness, and possibly ruined their fortunes in life, was exquisitely painful to him ; he buttoned his coat tightly across, he grasped his stick with a fierce hold, he set his teeth hard, but he could not but feel he had done wrong.

Lady Walgrave took some time to recover from the very disagreeable surprise which the discovery of her husband's embarrassments had occasioned, she thought it over in silence ; something must have occurred, of a very serious nature, to make Sir Josiah wish to part with his Isabelle. He had always been so annoyed at her praiseworthy attempts to bring the attentions of this gentleman or that, to an interesting termination, he had

always laughed at her very much, but now, at last he was aiding and abetting her ; that really was a triumph. She felt that it was more her duty than ever to marry her daughters ; and luckily Isabelle had only to say yes, whenever she pleased.

Lady Walgrave felt that she was not very likely to do so ; she was afraid she still cared for the fascinating, but to all outward appearance faithless Horace Leigh—she did not exactly see how she was to get over it—if it was so. She must exert the utmost powers of her eloquence—she rather piqued herself upon that. She had succeeded with Louisa in the memorable but unlucky adventure of Mr. Green ; she felt very foolish as she thought of that certainly, but still she had persuaded Louisa to marry a horrid little man ; why should she not be able to induce Isabelle to accept a handsome and really engaging young man, whom any woman might like—very well. She had now every motive to wish for success, if Sir Josiah

wished to marry his girls,—she was sure she did.

And so she called Isabelle to a conference in her dressing-room.

She was obliged to frame an excuse for suddenly entering upon the subject, so in her most dignified and magisterial manner she pointed to a chair, and addressed her daughter—

“ Mr. Keane has been again applying to me for an answer, my love, and I must say, that I am sorry to see a daughter of mine keeping a gentleman so long in suspense.”

She really *was* sorry.

“ He agreed to give me time, mama, but if he will have an immediate answer, you may say that really—I cannot make up my mind—I do not wish to marry.”

“ I see how it is, Isabelle,” said Lady Walgrave with great severity, “ you are still foolishly attached to Mr. Leigh.”

“ Mama, mama !” said poor Isabellé, in a deprecating tone, “ how can you say such things.”

"I don't believe he ever cared for you," continued Lady Walgrave, not attending to the interruption; "as Mrs. Vernon's acknowledged heir what was to prevent his coming forward?"

Isabelle hung down her head, she had no answer to that question, she had often sought for one in vain.

"No sooner did he find himself able to marry than he asked Mr. Keane to live with him, did that look as if he wished to marry you?"

This was too true, she could not contradict her mother.

"Then, Isabelle, you must remember from the moment I asked him here—from the first instant he was encouraged—he drew back."

Only too true.

"Would any man, who cared for you, have done that, my dear Isabelle?" said her mother.

They thought not, both of them; they

had every reason, in their ignorance, to think all this of Horace.

“Mama,” said Isabelle, gaining something like courage from her bitter mortification “I always thought Mr. Leigh would be disgusted at being asked so soon after we knew that he was rich ! it was so very evident—I haven’t a doubt that he despised us all.”

Lady Walgrave was silenced, it certainly might have been that!—Only suppose if after all, she had—as in the case of Mr. Green—done harm by her manœuvring ! it was just possible, how very annoying ! this was, indeed, turning the tables upon her —she could not let it pass without a refutation, or her power was gone.—A thought suddenly struck her, and she assumed an air of great superiority, mixed with no trifling share of indignation.

“My love ! you have allowed your feelings to run away with you, to make you disrespectful—to your mother—I am indeed surprised to see a child of mine infatuated

to that point ! it is a woman's duty to conceal her sentiments of this nature, but you would rather throw the blame even upon a parent, Isabelle, than even now, at last, after so much, believe that Mr. Leigh never loved you !”

Quite true again ; poor girl ! she would rather think anything than that ; she knew him better, and thought he must have some cause for his conduct let it *seem* ever so bad.

Blind reasoner as Lady Walgrave usually was, the conduct of Horace really appeared to her to be what she described—he had laid himself open to it all !

Isabelle Walgrave sat there like a culprit, she had not now a word to say except—

“ I always thought, mama, he would see through our inviting him—he is so clever.”

“ You think you lost him—through my fault—my laudable, motherly wish to make you happy in the way you wished ; *that* you reproach me with ? but I can prove to you, that could have had nothing to do with all

his conduct, he was trifling with you, my poor child, for he had engaged Mr. Keane to live with him for a year—*before* he was invited here!"

And that was also true.

In what a false position by kindness, by good feeling, had he placed himself. This was a very sad and humiliating thing to Isabelle ; if that were really true ; he never could have cared for her, and she had bartered and exchanged the first and deepest feelings of her girl's heart—for the mere shadow of affection—for a poor and meaningless flirtation !

"After all this, if you can think of Mr. Leigh," said Lady Walgrave, "I shall wonder indeed. If I thought there was the slightest chance of his ever coming forward, I should say, wait; he is the better match!"

This sentiment of course found no echo in the mind of the young girl; she was not steeled and hardened into worldliness.

"But knowing what I do,"—and the mother said this in such a way as to convince

poor Isabelle she knew a great deal more than she would tell—"I feel so certain that there is no hope; he never will, or never meant to, offer to you; that I advise you for your own good, my dear, not to make yourself ridiculous, and indeed contemptible, by showing every one you care for a man who does not care for you."

This most bitter and mortifying speech hurt poor Isabelle, as if it had been a blow—and she shrank back in shame.

"I will never think of Mr. Leigh again, mama," she said; "but surely I need—I need not marry Mr. Keane."

"Do you dislike him?" asked her mother.

"Certainly not," said Isabelle.

"He is good-looking, pleasant, gentlemanly—what would you have," said Lady Walgrave, shrugging her shoulders—"why what *would* you have?"

"He is a friend of Horace Leigh's—just think of that, mama!—his greatest friend!"

"I see nothing in that," said Lady Wal-

grave, wilfully shutting her eyes to all the painfulness of it.

"Mama," said Isabelle, bursting into tears, "I like Mr. Keane very much ; if I had never seen Horace Leigh, I might ; but now, mama, I do not wish to marry."

"And I am to see my prettiest daughter an old maid—a name that really is quite a disgrace—because she chooses to fall in love with the first person who will flirt with her—because she chooses to imagine he loves her ! I can only say, Isabelle, that I am thoroughly, justly, and completely ashamed of my own child."

To this really cruel taunt, Isabelle answered by her tears.

"If I were you, I would show some spirit," continued the detestable Lady Walgrave—there are such mothers in the world—and she actually fancied she was doing her duty—"if I were you, I would just show him, prove to the world and him, that if he chose to treat me in this shameful manner,

he could not break my heart : I should marry his friend."

" In pique, mama : is it fair to marry one man to pique another ?"

Here again the good sense of her daughter silenced the manœuvring mama.

" But you have owned you like young Frederick Keane."

" I like him—very well," said Isabelle.

" If Mr. Leigh marries his cousin, as I hear he will, most certainly I should have too much pride to mind it, and remain unmarried for his sake," said Lady Walgrave, bringing forward now her last and strongest argument.

Isabelle wept more than ever—bitterly ; but still she said—

" Tell him—tell Mr. Keane, I do not wish to marry."

" I can do no such thing ; your father wishes you to marry him,"

" Papa !" said Isabelle, much surprised.

" Indeed he does ; and as you doubt me, as my arguments, my facts, my representa-

tions have, I see, no effect upon you whatsoever : as I see you are determined to weep and mourn for one who never loved you, I shall go—leave you to do just as you please ; but when your father comes home, he will speak to you :—perhaps you will listen more to him.”

Isabelle liked Fred ; he was more suited to the calibre of her understanding than Horace ; she understood *him* as little as Fred did Blanche ; but still she could not forget Horace ; and she could not think him wrong.—“ Yet, if he was engaged !”

Sir Josiah had a conference with Isabelle. His wish had always been her law ; and that evening she accepted Fred !—another consequence of all the plots and plans.

When the sisters were alone in their own room in that hour of girlish confidence, Louisa turned suddenly to Isabelle, and said,

“ You do not seem much happier than I was on a similar occasion.”

“ Oh yes I am,” said Isabelle with some feeling of indignation.

"I doubt it," said Louisa, quietly twirling her long ringlets round her fair fingers, "if you are, there is no trusting to appearances," and she glanced at Isabelle's pale face and anxious eyes—"if I am right sorella mia, I wish that you may have as happy a termination to your affair as I had to mine!"

"I think," said Isabelle, who, having decided, was determined to justify her decision "I really do think you need not compare Mr. Keane to Mr. —"

"Don't mention his name, the little horror," said Louisa with a kind of shudder, "we had enough of that most horrid name to last a whole long life."

"I really shall be obliged to you not to compare your case with mine," said Isabelle with some dignity.

"I may compare the circumstances we are placed in, and shall do so—though there certainly can be no comparison between the gentlemen," continued Louisa, "you will never persuade me that mama's long conver-

sation with you had nothing to do with your engagement. I know too well what mama's arguments must lead to!"

Isabelle had nothing to answer to this at the moment, she was not always ready with a reply as some young ladies are—so Louisa went on.

"You once declared, that not a dozen of mamas should make you marry a man you didn't like; you had not then been tried—but now you have!"

"I should be sorry indeed," said Isabelle Walgrave very gravely—"that you or any one should think me capable of marrying a man I did not love—it would be wrong in me and most unjust to him—you know all that has passed with Horace Leigh—yes I will call him *Horace* just once more, for the last time Louisa, and now I will never think of him by that name again. He must be Mr. Leigh to me now for the future, he was a stranger once—I often used to wonder how I could be happy before we met, and now he must be to me once more a stranger, worse

than a stranger now, *and we* must be happy again—in other ways. Yes, I have cared for him but it seems long ago! They say that Love dies without Hope; well, I have found it so; I am too proud to love, unloved—there are no harsher words in language than such as accuse one of that, Louisa, and those biting words my mother used to me—unjustly, for when I heard he cared for Blanche, he ceased to be to me, what he had been. My heart seemed turned to ice—I felt its chill—but I *have* ceased to care for him."

"He has behaved shamefully ill," said Louisa energetically.

"Do not say that," replied her sister, "I cannot hear it."

"If any man ever appeared to care," continued Louisa.

"Hush," said Isabelle, "I cannot bear to hear him blamed."

"Love never could blind *me* to that extent," said Louisa.

"Wait till you are tried," quoted her

sister, wait until such a mind as Horace Leigh's—but I must forget the past; I have now promised, to love his friend, that is the bitterest part of all my trial, if it had been an enemy it would have been far better than his friend! I dare not think what he will feel when he first hears the news."

"He will be sitting with Blanche Trevor!" said Louisa angrily, "I do believe she is a hypocrite! for she pretended in a thousand underhand small ways, to help Horace with you—and then to marry him herself!"

Isabelle turned very pale at these plain words, and in a choked voice she said, "mama has told me that Frederick Keane himself declared that Mr. Leigh had never liked me, why then should he not—marry *her*; we women, dear Louisa must care for those that care for us; it is our destiny, and I doubt not that almost every one has gone through such a grief as mine—but what a blessing it should be to me that I *can* marry Mr. Keane—papa wished it so much! that is a mystery to me."

" What did he say ?" enquired Louisa.

" Merely that circumstances led him now to wish that we were married ; that if I could like him—it was his earnest wish—it is impossible to know that gentle, handsome Fred, and not to like him, and so what could I say ?"

" Ah well ! it is a mystery to me," replied Louisa, " from first to last I cannot understand it all ; but this I know, if Mr. Leigh and Blanche have so deceived me I shall never believe in any one again."

## CHAPTER III.

WHAT Horace felt upon receiving the tidings imparted by Fred, it is difficult to describe, but at the first he was quite stunned; he had just caught the words, announcing the fact of the engagement, and he had read no more. He sat there, with the paper open before him, he was stupified : and then it struck him, it must be a joke---a silly joke of Fred's; the colour returned to his pale cheek, and he read the letter.

" Hurrah, Horatio! how you will be amused, I see you now, how you will laugh at me; but don't now please, it may be fun to you...but being married is no joke to me!...Isabelle Walgrave has accepted me —now laugh, Horatio, as you may---it is *too* true.---She took a little time to think of it ;---but that was Lady Walgrave's doing, because I am not rich.—I'm going to be a married man! no one can say Isabelle is not pretty, can they? but somehow I almost wish I wasn't booked—only you *wouldn't* come you know, and so I felt I must do something. If you had but been here it wouldn't have happened—when I have you, Horatio, I want no one else; but you have accustomed me never to be alone, and so I couldn't bear it.—Great joke my being caught, isn't it?—I rather dread seeing your face with that terrible quizzing smile of yours.—They told me here, at least the mother did, that you had once admired my Isabelle; but I soon told them it was no such thing; *I* knew better than that!

“ I’m very much afraid we shall not have a jolly wedding—Sir Josiah is dreadfully embarrassed, and they go abroad at once ; I do believe that after all I shall be married abroad, though I always declared I would never leave England.—You must be my brides-man wherever it may be.—I’m very happy, of course I am, and yet I wish I was not actually going to be married !—Oh, Horace, if you had but come to town instead of lingering down there at Leigh—Well never mind, it can’t be helped—I was a long time making up my mind which I liked best, and now I fancy, that Louisa--but never mind all that, I’m done, and so good-bye, old fellow—this is a famous joke to you I know.

“ Yours truly

“ FRED.”

When once Horace began to read the letter he perused it once, twice, many times, he could not believe the words.—If Fred

had tried to torture his poor friend he could not have done so more effectually, than he had done in his total innocence—" If you had but been here it wouldn't have happened " seemed terribly distinct to Horace; for he knew how true the sentence was—if he had not been tied hand and foot by his duties there—by all his sad and painful duties—Fred would not have married Isabelle.

Then Lady Walgrave knew that he loved Isabelle—and Keane had said that he knew better !

They must have thought that he was right, that living always with him he was sure to know—if he had only trusted Fred, all this would not have happened !

Poor Horace grew quite superstitious in his grief; he felt, he thought, some strange fatality must be upon him ; for everything he did, and everything he left undone—worked him some deadly harm. There was in the whole letter but one short line which was not the cause of anguish to the unfortunate Horace, it was this : " She took

some time to think of it." She had not then given him up for ever without a struggle ; she had not undertaken to forget him and love another without consideration, and yet there was not much real comfort in the idea ; for how had her deliberation ended ? by her accepting Fred !

He was bowed down with sorrow ; that young heart of his knew the worst of griefs to one so young—an unrequited love—and yet he felt he could not blame her ; for Blanche, dear Blanche had thought him wrong—if he had attended to *her* words this could not have happened, she had urged him to speak, and he had been silent—Blanche thought that Isabelle had reason to imagine he did not care for her : and so she was about to marry one who loved her (she might fancy) better.—Yet Frederick could not love as he had done ; it was not in his nature—yet he would win the prize.

And did he care for her ?—that question almost answered itself in Frederick's letter —“ he wished he wasn't booked !” what a

way of putting a position which would have been to Horace Leigh the height of human happiness—from sentiments of honour *he* had lost what Fred had won—and did not value.—*That* wrung the heart of the unselfish Horace more than his own loss.—Fred did not really care for her—Fred did not really value her!—he could have liked Louisa—again Horace groaned aloud at his own unfortunate fate.

If Fred had ever seen anything in the world he must have seen the love Horace and Isabelle had felt for one another;...but as he thought of this, the words of Blanche came back to him...

“ How can you make a friend of such a foolish creature, depend upon it you will have reason to repent it some of these days ! ”

He had indeed *now* reason to repent it; but still it was his fault ; if he had given Fred a hint...this never would have been. ...He had himself to blame...alone.

And what was he to do...when Luke

came home he must return to town and live with Fred till he was married...could anything be devised more painful to his feelings than that...and he must write, write and congratulate, and know that Isabelle would hear he had congratulated *another* upon *her love!*—that was even more painful to poor Horace.... Yet he must do it, people always do congratulate, let their own feelings be what they may.

If Isabelle was to marry another man, how much was the sorrow of it increased to him by her marrying his friend ; he must hear him talk of her ; he must see them together...he must be constantly in their society after they were married...he did not see as yet how he could bear that trial. Brought on by himself as all this was, he felt it more ; had he but done as Blanche advised him !

Mrs. Vernon had left the Leigh some little time before this unexpected news arrived ; the energetic old lady had spent a week at Brighton with the Trevors before

she returned home, and as soon as she had recovered in some degree from the fatigue of her long journey, and the anxiety of seeing her old friend Mrs. Trevor—still very ill—she penned the following characteristic epistle to her favourite nephew:

“ MY DEAR HORACE,

“ Long as I have known you I have never been really angry with you before; not all that I have lately seen to make me love and esteem you more, can induce me to forgive you this. What have I said or done, Horace, that you should have so little confidence in my affection—that you should treat me in so unkind a manner ? that you should not tell me you had an attachment ! *Luke* told me, and *you* did not !—is not that more than enough to make me angry, answer me if you can.—I know what you would say ; I know your reasons, I *understand* them, Horace; but still I am really hurt and pained, that you should

have been unhappy, and made others unhappy—for my sake.

“ What is the consequence ? You have worried *me*, and made me cross which I did not think possible—with you.—It was ill-judged, very ill-judged, what object have I in now life but to contribute to your happiness—it is so, and you know it—and out of that excessive delicacy, which is your fault, Horace, carrying it to an extreme as you have done in this you, have endeavoured to prevent my having the happiness of making yours ; it was cheating me, Horace, and I am as vexed as if you had cheated me in any other way. I verily thought you cared for Blanche ; but when I had long *tête-à-têtes* in Mrs. Trevor’s sick room the other day, she told me she had long suspected you were in love with a Miss Walgrave. Blanche never owned it to her or to me ; I have my strong suspicions she knows more than she will say ; but my son, for you are a son to me, why did you keep this so profound a secret —and yet I know and appreciate your

conduct though I am angry, still very angry, Horace.—There is one way, and only one in which you can earn your forgiveness, make yourself happy—propose at once, let me see you married before I die.—Everything that a mother would wish to do for an only and dearly loved child you may depend upon.—Go to my lawyer, if you can leave your mother, if not---write ; he will tell you what I purpose doing---I want no thanks, I only want to make you happy in your own way.

“ Your most affectionate

“ OLYMPIA VERNON.”

This was indeed heaping sorrow upon sorrow ! that sad sentence, “ *too late*,” was all that Horace Leigh could utter, when he had read what might have given him such a world of happiness—one little month ago.

Everything conspired to make these days of bitterness almost more than he could bear

with calmness : all that was wanted to fill the cup of sorrow to the brim came in that letter ; and Horace rushed out of the house —the want of air seemed to stifle him ; and pacing rapidly along, he entered the old, time-honoured woods of Leigh. The sunshine was painful to his eyes—the sounds of every-day life were hateful to him : he must learn to bear his great grief in the calm, silent woods ; there he could school himself —there he could at least hide himself till the worst moments of this exceeding bitter mortification should have passed away.

Perhaps the crowning pang of all those which crowded on his mind, and bowed his usually proud and elastic spirit to the earth was this : he knew the fault was all his own.

Yet it could scarcely be called a fault—the brotherly kindness which induced him to share his home with his really helpless friend. It could scarcely be a fault, that scruple of his, towards Mrs. Vernon ; and yet in their consequences they came back

on him as faults ; if actions are to be judged of here, by their effects alone, Horace was wrong ; and yet he had but meant to do his duty.

“ What would Blanche say ? ” That question came to his mind, once and again.

It is usual in this world of ours, for our best friends to triumph over us, when they have turned out to be right—let the consequence of their having proved so, be ever so sad to us. Would Blanche do this—would she turn upon him, with her superior wisdom now ? Of that she was not capable ; the littleness of mind that could do that could not be imputed to her ; she was too stern, too grave, and too decided for a woman. She loved to be a mentor, young as she was—she liked to be the teacher, rather than the taught ; she had not perhaps the yielding softness, which is so fascinating and so useless in a woman’s character ; but in Blanche there was not one particle of meanness or littleness of mind. She often wondered at the weaknesses of Horace, she

really could not sympathise with them—she had no weaknesses herself ; but doubtless all those waverings of his, attracted and interested her firmer mind ; it pleased and flattered her deeply, to controul and guide as she often did, one so superior as her cousin ; she could not be led from the plain path by the imaginations and scruples which so often biassed him, but she did not admire him the less because he was wanting in that strength of mind of which perhaps she had too large a share ; and she esteemed him more for all the upright feelings he disclosed in their long conferences ; she would have guided him better, she thought, than he could guide himself ; but when the consequences of the steps he had taken came so heavily and so suddenly upon him—he had nothing to fear from the triumphant feelings of Blanche Trevor.

Deeply and severely as if it had been her own, did she feel his sorrow and disappointment ; her only thought was how she could

console him—her only feeling, strange to say, one of unmixed grief.

On her return from Leigh, Mrs. Vernon had determined to make her will at once; but with a weakness, very common, and from which, it appeared, even her strong mind was not wholly exempt, she put it off from day to day; she thought there was time enough. She sent once or twice for her lawyer, and talked the matter over with him; but she gave him on no such occasion the positive permission which he required, to draw out a draft of the will for her inspection.

This hesitation was little in accordance with the strength of her determination in this particular matter, or with her usual firmness; but people seem often to fancy that in signing their will they are signing their own death-warrant; and those who have much to regret seldom like the idea of death, therefore they put it off, till suddenly surprised by the great leveller of mankind, and sorrow, and injury, and disappointment.

are often the consequence of this weak, and often wicked, neglect.

Of this, while Luke's affairs were prospering so fast, Mrs. Vernon might have been accused, if she had not unexpectedly caught a violent cold, which ended in an inflammation, so severe, that her old medical attendant, with a sorrow-stricken face, felt it his duty to declare to her, "That if she had any worldly affair to settle, she had better do it, and at once."

Considerably startled by this, Mrs. Vernon ejaculated—"This is sudden indeed!" and desired her lawyer might be summoned. His residence was nearer than that of the physician, who had been sent for, but had unfortunately gone to visit a patient, some miles on the other side of the county town.

The good old lawyer, Mr. Browning, arrived the first, and was ushered into the bed-room, where poor Mrs. Vernon was lying, in great suffering of body, but with a mind as clear as ever.

This time there was no delay; Mr.

Browning wrote out a draft of her intentions—bequeathing everything, house, and estate, and farms—personal property of all descriptions, to her young nephew, Horace Leigh, who was made sole executor, and also residuary legatee; nearly the whole of her large fortune being in land.

These were her own instructions as she delivered them, in a voice broken occasionally by pain, to the old lawyer.

When the draft was ready, he wished to put it in due form, but she said, sadly,

“No time now for that; I am getting worse, fast. Make this secure, and legal—there can be no other.—I must sign now or never.”

Mr. Browning looked at her, and felt it might be too true; so having asked her to name those she wished for as witnesses, which were himself, her favorite attendant, and her old housekeeper, they were called in; and after witnessing her signature, they appended their own—“Mary Watkins,” “Hannah White,” “John Browning.”

Then the will, by her orders, was placed by the lawyer himself in her large writing-desk ; and she put out her hand to him, and said, as well as her exhaustion would permit her to speak—

“ Good-bye ! You will know where to find it when I am gone.”

Mr. Browning pressed her hand, with all the affectionate respect she never failed to win from those who knew her, as he had done, for a series of years ; he feared he was indeed looking his last upon the kind old friend, whose loss would be great to him, if only in a professional point of view : for with the inherent selfishness of human nature he thought of that : and then went down the gallery, adding up in his own mind the proceeds, and encreasing value of the carefully nursed property he had just seen about to pass away from their mistress to her heir ; wondering if after all the attention, which had brought the estates into such flourishing condition, wondering if they would go, as they might do, in careless hands—into rack

and ruin ; hoping that all the pains in which he had himself had no small share, as Mrs. Vernon's constant adviser, would not be thrown away by the new master—rather comforted by the remembrance of the character of the young man, whom he had seen from time to time; but shaking his head to himself, and giving a sharp cut to his steady poney as he remembered that the temptations of such wealth were great, and might alter, for the worse, any man's character. He had seen this before—and the thought vexed him much ; for he had the same kind of interest in the estates, with which he had had so much to do, as a sailor has in his ship. It vexed him to think another man should undo his work, as much as it would grieve the captain of a gallant frigate to see another man succeed him in his post, and lose her by ignorance or neglect. The idea greatly annoyed him ; and he gave the poney such a sharp cut again, that the poor creature started forward in dismay.—We must vent our own worries upon somebody !

By the time that Mr. Browning reached his home, going as he did at an unusual rate, the carriage of Dr. Wilnott reached the door of High Elms ; the physician had heard of her serious illness and felt sorrowful, such was the universal affection Mrs. Vernon had won, that he, as well as all who had heard of her illness, felt she would be a public loss, one of the good old school ; the old people of five and twenty years ago, whose place cannot be filled again—the race is changed.

He gravely heard the family surgeon's melancholy report, and entered his patients room ; he saw her danger but he trusted much to the strength of her constitution ; that strength which most of us remember in our grandfathers and grandmothers, but which seems to descend only to a chosen few of their grandchildren—few of us know it from experience.

" Well Doctor," said Mrs. Vernon, " is there a hope ?"

" Happy am I to say there is," replied the experienced physician, " I have no doubt

I have a remedy to touch your case; I will not deny your danger, but I shall hope to bring you through!"

Mrs. Vernon turned aside to hide her tears, she had not hoped for this, and felt it deeply, "I thank you Doctor, thank you," she uttered through her tears.

"Thank God," replied the Doctor, solemnly; for he was one of those who bring religion as well as science to the dying bed. Still there was doubt, it was a new and not often used remedy that Dr. Wilnott was about to try; whenever he had made the trial, it had been in such cases crowned with full success, but by many of his profession it was thought "kill or cure," that most forcible of expressions.

That there might be no possible chance lost for the want of care, he left her, saw his own powerful prescriptions made up with his own eyes, and hastily returning saw them administered; he did not leave the house that day, the night he passed in the next room, and by his skill and attention had the

real, heartfelt happiness of knowing her to be safe through the attack ; rescued from the very doors of the grave.

Life was to Mrs. Vernon still sweet and pleasant, though she was far advanced in years, much older than the squire of Oakleigh, and she was happy and grateful for her un hoped for recovery.

The family had been greatly alarmed by the letters written by the family surgeon, but those of Dr. Wilnott fortunately reached them the same day, having been in time for the same post, containing an expression of the hope he felt ; he advised them to wait one day's post before they came to High Elms, and they did so ; the next letters joyfully announced her perfect safety.

## CHAPTER IV.

A TRAVELLING carriage covered over with the dust of a long journey was driving slowly down the steep hill that has been already described, and when the tall chimneys of the old house first appeared through the trees that surrounded it on every side, Luke exclaimed,

“Look, Emily, look—it is all—ours.”

This was one of the first traits of character which opened her eyes to that of the man she had married ; she marvelled he

could think of that at such a moment, no one could have *expressed* the feeling but Luke Leigh.

The widow had been gradually recovering somewhat of calmness, but when she saw her darling son again, she flung herself into his arms, and wept aloud. Luke stood there, awkwardly supporting her indeed ; feeling annoyed at what he termed in his own mind “a scene,” and knowing he ought to feel more grief and sorrow than he did—this made him uneasy, and that made him cross—so that it was with his old heavy frown he placed his mother on the sofa and sat down beside her.

Emily sat down upon a stool at the feet of her mother-in-law, and not having the words of consolation ready, having had so little grief in her young life; she could but take the poor old lady’s worn and withered hand, kiss it and weep—but this gentle though silent sympathy was soothing and refreshing to the mourner, contrasted as it was with Luke’s abrupt, unfeeling manner ;

accustomed as she had lately been to all the tenderness, the thoughtful consideration of poor Horace—for the first time it seemed to strike her what Luke really was ; she would not for a moment allow herself to think he had always been thus ; she would not for an instant entertain that idea—it was too painful—she would and did rather fancy he was changed, that he was ill, or overcome with grief anything rather than that he was cold, callous and selfish, she willingly and eagerly deceived herself.

Then Emily, with an instinctive delicacy, rose, and left them together. She felt she was as yet little better than a stranger there —between the mother and her son. And then poor Mrs. Leigh had a fresh burst of grief ; and Luke walked hastily up and down the room : not in the least knowing what he should say.—He had no heart *to tell him what to do !*

But instead of kind and holy promptings of natural affection, there arose in his mind a great impatience of all this grief and tears

—his mother ought to have been more glad to see *him* ; the squire was gone, and rivers of tears could never bring him back ; what was the use of grieving : it was a horrible bore—detestable ; how Horace could have stood it all, he could not think : he must have had enough of it ; how very fortunate for him that he had been abroad, out of the way of all these horrors ; it was too bad now : what must it have been at first ! how very glad he was, not to have been at home.

Such were the exact reflections of the idolized son, as he walked up and down in a state of great and increasing bad humour !

He had just began—feeling he must say something—to address his poor mother.

“ I’m sorry for all this—deucedly sorry, mother ; but it can’t be helped—don’t grieve—for in the state my father was, I think it must be looked upon as a—happy release.”

And he thought he had been comforting the widow in her affliction by those words,

which seem the most unfeeling in our whole language.

“ Happy release !”—To the worn sufferer—to the dying Christian, it may be so ; but to those who remain : those who have watched and wept, no words can give a greater chill than those so often used by such as Luke.

Who that has ever cared, and nursed, and loved, ever could think the loss so great, so irreparable to them, a “ happy release !”

Just at this time, when Luke was adding to the distress which was to him an annoyance, Horace, with his fine, open face, and his frank manner, chastened and subdued by his own trials, entered the room. Seeing the state poor Mrs Leigh was in, he hastened to her—brought her a glass of wine—insisted on her tasting it; and after a short time, led her to her own room, to rest, after the painful and violent excitement she had gone through.

When he came back, his reward was a sneering remark from his brother’s curling lips.

" You have actually become a nurse!—you are as good as an old woman, Horace! I never should have thought you could have come to this!"

" It is no bad compliment to be called like a woman, when there is death and sorrow in a house," said Horace, gently. " It has been painful work; our poor, dear mother has nearly killed herself with grief."

" What a bore for you," said Luke, shrugging his shoulders.

Horace rose hastily, and walked to the window. It required a strong effort on his part to let such a speech pass quietly by; he could have said so much in his utter disgust, but his habitual self-command was useful now: and he just answered—

" It was no bore, Luke, for it was my duty."

" Really, for a young fellow like you," said Luke, " that speech is regularly methodistical.

" One cannot have been at a death-bed,"

answered Horace, “ and not feel deeply, and think gravely, whatever one may have done before.”

“ Oh, come, Horace—keep all that for my mother and my aunt—they may stand it, but, by Jove, all your long faces and sermons are more than *I* can stand. I was very sorry for the poor old squire when I first heard of his death ; and I won’t deny,” said Luke, continuing in a lower, and less unfeeling voice, “ that I miss my father here, and catch myself looking for him, when the door is opened ; and once, just now, when you were gone out with my mother, I almost fancied that I heard him coming ! I can’t deny I feel a consciousness of something very strange and very wrong ; and it puts me out, too, to see my mother look so ill, and cry ; it makes me quite uncomfortable ; but I *will* not be worried ; and I will be hung but I won’t make myself miserable about it ; I couldn’t help my father’s dying—it was no fault of mine ; and so I shall try and forget it, when I can.

I shall go now, and speak to Emily—your low voices, and miserable looks, upon my soul, I really can't stand them." And so he left the room.

Horace still resolutely held his peace, he would not quarrel with his brother, and he must have done so, had he spoken as he felt.

Emily showed much that was amiable in all her behaviour to poor Mrs. Leigh; and she already really loved her as a daughter, and clung to her in a sort of helpless affliction, which was very touching; this sweetness of disposition soon brought the young wife and her new brother-in-law into feelings of greater regard and sympathy than might otherwise have sprung up between people so different; she felt a confidence in him she could not feel in Luke.

There was now much business to be arranged; that is to say Horace had much to settle for his brother, and his mother; for having given up his younger children's settlement, young Horace Leigh had no part or

portion whatsoever in his father's property — Everything he had to hope for, must come from Mrs. Vernon.

For Mrs. Leigh there was not so great a provision made, as might have been expected ; her own fortune was all that she could *claim* ; the Squire with his blind fondness had trusted to the generosity of Luke and that had no existence, except in the partial father's fancy.—The knowledge of this was the first thing which opened the eyes of Horace to the folly he had committed in resigning the whole of his birthright ; had it not been for that, he could have helped his mother ; but here again he had tied his own hands, and back to his remembrance came the words of Blanche—“generous, but weak”—he felt that they were true.—How he had hampered himself of late—how was he caught at all points in nets of his own weaving—what strange infatuation had been on him to make him do, and leave undone so much—he had thrown his own happiness

away—and now he had risked much of his mother's comfort ; for he knew Luke.

One day Emily came into the library where Horace was sitting, thinking how he could best manage to speak to Luke about their mother, and asked him to take a walk with her ; he saw that something was the matter, her cheeks were flushed, her bright and merry eyes were red with recent tears, it was very evident that something was wrong.

“ Horace,” she exclaimed, as soon as they were out of sight and hearing from the house, “ I have been having such a quarrel with Luke, such a dreadful fight ; but I know I am right, I am sure you will take my part.”

“ I don't know,” said Horace, “ those who interfere between man and wife generally offend them both, and you *must* not quarrel with Luke, *I* would not, willingly,” and he looked at her in an affectionate, but serious manner.

"Don't lecture, Horace, till you hear me out," said Emily, returning his smile, "it is very delightful to have a brother who will listen to one's troubles ;" and she returned his gaze with one that was very grave for her.

"Luke and I have been quarrelling about your poor, dear mother.—She ought to live with us now ;—ought she not ?"

"So much do I think as you do about it, Emily, that when you called on me to walk with you I was revolving in my mind the way in which I should propose that very plan to Luke. Seriously, dear Emily, I don't see how my mother can have the comforts she requires, unless she does !"

"I didn't know that—I'd no idea she wasn't very rich ; I know nothing about such things; but even I could see it must be very hard for her to leave the place she has lived in so many years, to go and live alone —it is a very dreadful thing to be *alone*, I found that out—on board the steamer;

nobody to sit with, nobody to speak to—only just fancy how horrid it must be to dine alone! Poor, dear old lady, I can't bear to think of it; she wants some one to nurse and pet her, to take care of her and comfort her, and though all that is not much in *my* way, still I am better than no one, am I not?"

And she said all this quite gravely, it was her way of seeing things.

"I don't often think about other people, they generally think for me," said she again, more giddily, "but that poor mother of ours, I cannot bear that she should suffer more! —she has indeed suffered enough—I hadn't the least idea what sorrow really was—till I saw her!"

"I thank you for all this," said Horace, with much feeling—the strange daughter-in-law cared more for the poor widow than did her own beloved and petted son.

"But Luke?" enquired he, "what did you disagree about?"

"He said he would not have his mother in the house," said Emily, in an indignant tone.

"Indeed?" said Horace, "perhaps he was angry at the time."

"Not when he said it; he was as cool as I am, indeed a great deal more so, for I am in a rage—something quite new for me, I feel quite odd!"

"What reason did he give?" said Horace.

"The trouble!" answered Emily, "he could not bear to see her miserable face, he never could be happy himself whilst she was here! what do you think of that?"

Horace took care not to express, by word or look, his opinion of Luke's conduct, but there could be but one; he saw that Luke was beginning to show himself to his young wife in his true colours, and he deeply regretted it; he scarcely knew what it was best to do; the clever, astute Horace Leigh was at a loss in this, his new position, standing between man and wife.—Whether

it would be wiser to leave Emily to find Luke out, and manage him in her own way—whether a little just and righteous opposition from the woman he loved might do him good, or whether it would be kind to warn her, Luke had never been opposed, and most assuredly would never tolerate it long—whether it would be better to warn her not to try his temper, Horace really could not decide.

Luckily Emily was so taken up with thinking over her really serious quarrel with her husband, she was still in such an agitation, partly, however, caused by her violent indignation, that she did not, for the moment, remark his silence, so she went on.

“ I had no idea that Luke could look so dreadfully ill-tempered as he did—I behaved very well at first, indeed I did—I told him his poor, dear mother would soon look less wretched with us all around her, that she must be sorry to leave such a dear darling of a place as the old Leigh.

I did that to please him, for between ourselves, Horace, I think it very dull, and then I promised he should have no trouble in amusing her—I would do that somehow or other—and I said I knew nothing of house-keeping, that we should go all to wreck and ruin if she didn't stay! that had some little effect upon him, and I really thought he was about to give a cool consent—but no! not he."

"What did he say to all your kind and womanly arguments?" said Horace, touched by her giddy way of doing a good action.

"Said! that I knew nothing about it, that I was a little fool, and that he chose his wife to be the mistress of his house—"

"Your answer, Emily?" enquired Horace, for she had stopped abruptly, and was thinking over the unkind things that Luke had said—for the first time.

"I told him that, that poor, dear creature in the horrible widow's cap would never interfere unless we wished it, I was sure of that—though in my heart I wish she

would ; when she is better poor, dear thing, it would amuse her ; to sit there doing nothing, thinking of the old Squire, is very bad for her, isn't it, Horace ?—Thinking is bad for any one I do believe !—I have thought more to-day than I ever did in all my life—and what's the use of it—I am unhappy ; and I never was before !”

“ My dearest sister you must make friends with Luke—”

“ Not I,” said Emily, “ that will never do, he must make friends with me ! If I once allow I was wrong he will never believe me right again.”

“ You were indeed most kind and right to try to serve my mother with her son ! you never perhaps will be more right in your cause, Emily ; but oh, believe me, Luke is not the man to quarrel with, if you would lead a happy life.”

“ I have just found that out,” said she in a low, very low voice, “ you need not tell me, Horace.”

And Horace was very sorrowful, he felt

the trials of that fair young creature had begun; where they might end, or how, he did not wish to think.

"I knew I was but doing my duty, Horace—he need not have been so unkind; of course I only cared about poor Mrs. Leigh because I was *his* wife, and it was not for *him*...." tears came fast into her usually laughing eyes.

"What did he say?" said Horace kindly, "perhaps he did not mean it."

"Oh a thousand harsh and horrid things," said Emily; "one was, and made me so very angry, one was—I only wished her to be with us—to save me trouble."

"How could that be?"

"The trouble of an establishment," said Emily, "of keeping house—I'm sure I had no selfish motive—none but compassion, and I was hurt, so deeply hurt that *he* should think I had!"

There were tones of pain and indignation in the young voice of his sister-in-law which roused Horace out of his caution.

"He judged of your motives by his own, and they are more selfish than those of any man on earth."

"Indeed," said Emily, in a strange low tone.

"I did not mean exactly that—I was angry—about my mother Emily, I have some reason—I said too much, but Luke *is* selfish now, but with a common selfishness—he wishes to have his house and his young wife's society all to himself without the constant interruption of a third person; I scarcely wonder at him."

"*You do,*" said Emily looking up in his face with a mournful smile. "You know you *do*. But although you mean it kindly you can't deceive me—*now*."

She laid an emphasis upon the word which fell upon the conscience of her brother-in-law, like an accusation; it seemed to him to say, why did you not undeceive me when there was yet time—why let me undeceive myself, why let me marry such a man?

Emily had not learnt to feel that yet; his

conscience had gone before her thoughts; but the day would come, and must come when she would feel this and more—he knew it must be so.

“ You must not judge of Luke by—by to-day,” said Horace with a great effort, “ perhaps if we say nothing about it for a little while, if he thinks it over, he will see it as we do, Emily, and ask my poor dear mother of his own accord to live with him, perhaps he did not like being dictated to even by you.”

“ I shall not mention the subject to him again,” said she, “ I am much too angry; we parted in a rage—both of us, and I have lived all these long years, and never once was in a rage at home ; but then they always let me do just as I liked—my poor dear—happy home !” said she, involuntarily contrasting all the peace and happiness she left behind her there, with what Luke Leigh had said to her—comparing, in sorrowful silence, all her ideas of him, with the reality.

“ You must not disagree with Luke my

darling sister," said Horace in the most affectionate manner he had ever assumed to her, "he cannot bear it, Emily—he *will* not bear it—even I, a man, his brother, rather than tempt him to a quarrel—I give up to him, Emily, and have done so, as boy and man for years—in all things not actually wrong I let him have his way—if *I* have done so, surely you, dear girl, his wife—had better for your own sake—"

"Not for my own sake, certainly," said Emily, in a coquettish way; "I have some power over him—he *shall* come round. I will not be the first to make our quarrel up."

"Then you will have another, and a worse," said Horace, very earnestly; "and if you do not give up for your own sake, give up for his."

"What do you mean?" asked Emily.

"Do not tempt him to sin—anger, without a cause, is sin."

"I do not understand you," said Emily, in a pettish tone; but she *did*—and the

words made a deeper impression than even he expected.

"One thing I will say," said the young wife, who was gradually recovering her spirits, being quite sure Luke would not long be on bad terms with her if she determined otherwise.

"What's that?" said Horace.

"That you are the greatest darling of a brother-in-law that anybody with an ill-tempered husband ever had—that I shall always tell you my troubles—that I shall always ask you your advice; and perhaps—who knows!—sometimes I may even follow it, if you are good. You see I am quite good-tempered again, thanks to you and your kindness; and I shall go and make it up with Luke—in my own way; and you shall see at dinner, now, he will be quite himself."

"And to reward you, Emily," said Horace, "I think I have discovered a mode of making him do what we wish; but I shall wait—patiently wait, some days; let him cool

down ; and then I shall use some arguments that he will feel, for they will touch himself. Such has been *my* method of managing him, Emily ; and so have I avoided a collision with him all these years. It has been at the expense to me of self-denial, many a time ; for I have a defect, my dear little sister, that you have not, by nature—and must never learn to have ;” he said this in a very grave and earnest way, meeting her gentle eyes with a firm look—“ *I* have a temper too.”

“ No one would think it, Horace.”

“ It is not the less true for that,” said he ; and with those words they parted ; each loving the other better for every word that had passed between them, in that short but important colloquy.

A week or two elapsed ; all business matters were finally arranged ; and then—but not till then, did Horace keep his promise of trying his arguments on Luke.

“ My mother has not enough to live upon,” observed he, one day when they were in the

library alone : “ you will have to allow her something—my father left it to your generosity. People will be enquiring what you have done for her.”

“ Will they ?” said Luke ; “ I never thought of that. I must allow her something, then—I can’t get off.”

“ It would be much more economical if you asked her to live with you,” said Horace, carelessly ; “ she would save you three hundred a year ;—Emily is so young and inexperienced.”

“ True—I will ask my mother to stay with us,” said Luke.

## CHAPTER V.

IT may be remembered that the Trevors went to Brighton ; and on their first arrival, before Mrs. Trevor became ill, they mixed much in the gay society about them ; and Blanche, with her quiet observations, amused herself greatly. They had many acquaintances there, but, unluckily, no friends ; and she felt little inclination to convert any of the fair and flirting young ladies she encountered, from the one, into the other.

She had not, however, been long at Brighton, before she was struck, on entering a ball-room, by a very beautiful face, of which she fancied she had a faint remembrance. When and where she had seen it, had totally escaped her memory; it might have been in a picture, or it might have been in a dream; but the recollection of that bright face haunted her; and to feel we *ought* to know a person, without being able to recognise them, is a most bewildering thing.

Blanche never waltzed, and did not care for dancing, so she sat there, watching and admiring the fair creature whom most others in the room were admiring also.

Men have an idea that women never admire beauty in one another; this is a very false impression; one woman can, and does continually admire another; the more so if she is plain herself, and perhaps still more if that other is her rival.

Blanche Trevor was utterly above all feelings of envy or jealousy, and indulged herself in the pleasure of gazing at beauty

without even a wish that that glorious gift was hers.

The young lady in question belonged to the most brilliant and queen-like order of loveliness.—Very tall, with a slight and graceful figure, that alone would have rendered her the most remarkable person in the room, had her features not been moulded with the most perfect regularity, and her countenance piquant in the extreme ; her dark straight eye-brows shaded a pair of brilliant hazel eyes, sufficiently deep set to give them a power and depth which nothing else can give ; long ringlets of the same dark chesnut as her eyes ; the most brilliant and changing colour contrasting with a whiteness of skin which is always more dazzling when combined with such coloured hair and eyes, than the complexion of any fair person can be ; lips of the deepest red closing over a set of large and pearly teeth of that peculiar almond shape not often seen—such was Grace Forrester.

Isabelle Walgrave had the passive and

unintellectual beauty of a statue, Blanche Trevor elegance and grace, and dignity ; but nothing in her deserved the name of beauty ; Emily had all the loveliness of a winning and capricious child, but Grace Forrester surpassed them all—she had the brilliancy of Emily, the classic beauty of Isabelle, the proud and intellectual dignity of the steady Blanche.

Miss Forrester was sitting with her bright face slightly thrown back listening to, and answering several gentlemen at once ; to one a satirical smile, to another a haughty bow ; to a third an overwhelming sarcasm, couched in the most elegant terms, pronounced in a voice of soft and womanly fascination, but cutting withal.

One or two of these discomfited heroes left the magic circle round her, and chancing to come near Blanche she overheard the following dialogue :

“ A finished flirt that girl !” exclaimed a Captain of huzzars, whose moustaches were

much more remarkable than anything else about him.

“ Yes! but in such good style, that one can’t laugh at her !” rejoined his friend, who had just wit enough to say what was really true.

“ Heiresses are a bore after all,” rejoined the militaire, “ they give themselves such airs !”

“ I really think,” affirmed the more astute civilian, “ that if *I* were a beauty, and an heiress too, like that satirical Grace Forrester, *I*, even *I* should like to give myself airs, and frown a little upon everybody in their turn—by Jove I should !” and they passed on.

“ Beautiful creature !” said one of a group, who a few moments after took their stand to gaze upon the belle of the room—within a step or two of Blanche—“ She is an angel !”

“ If she had only lived some hundreds of years ago—I would have fought all you

fellows for her sake!" ejaculated a very young man, who had been brought up in Germany.

"Don't be romantic, Joe!" replied his companion.

"She's quite a creature, isn't she, to die for?" said the admiring Joe.

"I'd rather live for her," replied the last speaker.

"She's very well at a distance," observed one of the group, "but she's much too satirical for me—it is a bold man who could pay her a compliment more than once!—she pulls it to pieces, and returns it to you in such rags and tatters, that for the first time in your life you feel convinced you are a fool!"

"Those eyes!" began the young and sentimental Joe.

"We know they are diamonds and all that," said his companion peevishly, "don't be poetical there's a good fellow, it won't do in England—come and have some champagne!"

And the corrected youth did as he was desired.

"And so, that is Grace Forrester!" said Blanche to Mrs. Trevor; "is she not lovely!"

"Just like her mother," answered she; "Grace has her beauty and her fortune, I wish sincerely she may be as happy as her mother was, whilst she lived, poor thing, which was not long—Grace never saw her mother."

"How long it seems since Grace and I were last together!" said Blanche; "we were such merry girls—but I have grown old, mama, faster than Grace. We must go and speak to her, as we have found her out."

"Oh not just yet my dear, I couldn't cross the room just now; these galloping people would annihilate us altogether."

Blanche smiled and waited; it was an interesting and curious thing to her, to encounter her old friend in such a way—to see the playmate of her childhood, the

clever and merry Grace, become the observed of all observers, Blanche saw that it was only the silly and absurd part of her admirers, who met with the cool and quiet rebuffs, which sent them away from her presence, with as much eagerness as they had sought it ; to the older, and more intellectual looking people who approached her, she listened quietly, and with them she conversed in a friendly and reasonable manner —but at the request of some gay dragoon that she would, “make him happy with a smile!” or, at the evident declaration of undisguised admiration from some bolder partner in the dance—her brilliant eyes would flash, her lips would open in some answer which apparently frightened the most enterprising of them all.

Blanche was amused to find that she had now begun to attract the attention of the spoilt beauty—she saw Grace look at her with just such a confused recollection of her face, as she herself had experienced—she saw her enquire, evidently enquire, who

she was—and then, with a smile far more sweet in its expression than those that had beamed upon any of her hundred and one admirers—Grace Forrester claimed acquaintance with Blanche.

The next and many following mornings they were to be seen sitting together, talking over the past and present of their short lives.

“ As to me,” said Grace on one of these occasions; “ I profess to be—a spoilt child—I confess that I am nothing better, and am sorry for it, it is my misfortune, but not my fault—my good cousin has taken great pains; and her endeavours have been crowned with full success !”

“ I never saw a person worship another, as she does you,” said Blanche laughing, “ she spoils you Grace, and you spoil her !”

“ I am obliged to behave tolerably well to her—a widow without any one to care for her but me!—so as I must give myself airs to some one, Blanche—I just amuse myself in the most ladylike affected manner—with

a perfect unconsciousness, of course ; in seriously insulting all the gay butterflies, who flutter after me and all *my money*, Blanche !”

“ I am not famous for my flatteries, Grace !—no one was ever made more vain by me, but really butterflies are excusable, and to be forgiven in your case—it is their nature to flutter round the fairest flowers.”

“ Blanche ! if you ever again say, hint, or look a thing so like what they say and insinuate, you must excuse my hating you.”

“ Oh, do by all means—if you can !” replied Blanche merrily. “ I think, however, by all the recollections of the ‘merry days when we were young,’ I may defy you.”

“ No one but you could safely defy me to anything,” said Grace tossing back her proud head and meaning what she said—“ But I have come earlier than usual Blanche, to tell you a piece of news most deeply interesting to me; I have received a letter from my brother, and he is on his way home. My brother whom I have not seen since I was

fifteen, three years ago ! my own dear brother Stephen."

"I rejoice with you," said Blanche, "although I never knew what it was to have a brother—except indeed Horace Leigh."

"You will like Stephen, Blanche," said Grace in a positive tone, "you must and shall like him, he will have so much to say, he has been travelling all this time ; and now, I want you to inform me why Stephen and your cousin Horace are no longer friends ?"

"I never could find out," said Blanche, "I only know, at College, after being the greatest friends, they quarrelled just before they passed their last examinations—oh no ! I now remember Horace is younger, and remained longer, it was just before your brother went they quarrelled."

"I have heard," said Grace, "that Stephen went abroad in consequence. "I only know that it changed Horace Leigh's character for life—he told me such was his grief at having given way to his temper then,

nothing should tempt him ever to do so again, and he has kept his resolution through many a painful trial ;" said Blanche very thoughtfully, "your brother ought to be aware of this."

"Promise me, Blanche, that you will like my dear Stephen ?"

"I can't make any such rash vows," said Blanche smilingly, "I have seen your brother more than once when he was the great friend of Horace, and we did not like one another, Grace."

"That must have been when my good cousin took me first to Italy ?"

"It was," said Blanche.

Stephen Forrester was indeed the dear friend with whom Horace had had the quarrel, which had so greatly influenced his after life.

The country round High Elms was very beautiful, especially between it and the county town ; the neighbourhood was famed for the beauty of its Parks and Groves, which were studded thickly in that direction ; the

families, within visiting distance, were so much upon a par that the society was on a much pleasanter footing than it would have been, had there been one or two great people to crush those of smaller pretensions ; one of the prettiest seats in the immediate vicinity of High Elms had however been shut up for a considerable time ; its owner was young and rich, but to the regret of his friends he had been absent abroad till he was, except by them, almost forgotten.

Stephen Forrester was now however hastening back to England from his far extended travels, though he had no interest beyond his home, no tie of affection except his love for his sister, and no other relation except Mrs. Bligh, the distant cousin with whom she had lived since the death of her parents left her an orphan at an early age. The only tie of friendship Mr. Forrester had ever formed had been snapped—not by his own hand—but by the temper of Horace Leigh. As boys they had met, as young men they had been friends, and Stephen

Forrester was far more formed by nature to be the companion of Horace than the gentle and foolish Fred—yet they had parted in silent but concentrated anger, and Stephen Forrester had determined never to be on any terms except those of the slightest acquaintanceship with Horace,—and if possible never to cross his path again. And yet he cared for him,—Horace had this peculiarity—no one could fill his place.

Mrs. Vernon, Blanche, Fred and young Forrester all in their different ways felt this.

A day or two after this Grace entered Mrs. Trevor's drawing-room, her bright face was very pale, her sparkling eyes were full of tears—something was very wrong.

"Oh Blanche!" she exclaimed, "my cousin has frightened me nearly to death, she has been so ill, there was but little hope for her last night, just think of that! but though she is better now, the doctors say *if* she recovers she must go at once to Devonshire—if that is not sufficient to restore her

she must go abroad ! and this to happen just when Stephen is coming home !

Blanche did her best to comfort her, but the evil was very real, and as soon as the invalid was sufficiently recovered, to the great regret of Grace who had become warmly attached to Blanche—she was obliged to quit her friend and Brighton for a sheltered nook upon the coast of Devonshire.

A day or two before their departure Blanche found Grace Forrester in her own room in a state of great indignation, and on enquiring the cause, she said half to herself :

“ If I had the slightest respect, or opinion of any one of these men I would keep their council, and my own ! but would you believe it, Blanche, I have had within the last few days no less than five *disinterested* proposals—from people I scarcely know—mere partners, Blanche.—One Captain of Huzzars, one Colonel of Dragoons—I hav’n’t patience to go through the list—all, all, devoted to my money !”

Grace Forrester said this with an exceeding bitterness—the idea that she would be sought for her thousands had been so anxiously instilled into her mind by her careful and experienced cousin, who felt the responsibility she had incurred by taking charge of a young and beautiful heiress, that she was more than usually alive to the designs of her numerous suitors.

"If you only knew the indignant contempt I feel for them all," said Grace with her dark eyes flashing, "I don't think I shall ever marry. I cannot believe in one of them."

"Take care, dear Grace," said Blanche, "that you do not confound amongst these money worshippers some *one*, who does not deserve your suspicions; take care you do not overlook some *one*, who might make you happy—it is not impossible to love you for yourself!"

"I do believe it is!" said Grace, passionately, "I wish I had been left to enjoy the illusions of my age—I wish my eyes had

not been opened—I wish I were not a heiress."

When Stephen Forrester arrived he followed his sister down to Torquay immediately, and Blanche did not renew her acquaintance with him, though she kept up a constant and confidential correspondence with the passionate and satirical, but fascinating Grace.

About this time Mrs. Trevor was taken ill—Mr. Leigh became gradually worse—his death followed, and then the short visit paid to them by Mrs. Vernon, then came to Blanche the astounding intelligence of Fred's engagement, and her whole time was taken up in nursing her mother, her sympathies, in suffering with Horace.

Soon after that event took place the young Luke Leigs returned to Leigh, and Horace was enabled to go back to town.

He had to go and live with Frederick Keane under the circumstances! he had to encounter all the thousand bitternesses inseparable from them! and the only consola-

tion he could have had was denied to him; Blanche was not yet in town.

These were bitter days indeed; but still he had only lost a woman he had loved—he had fine prospects still—he would be rich! he still had money—if not as yet—in certain prospect, and that was something surely.

When Horace stepped from his hackney coach at the door of his old abode in London—Fred, who had been on the watch, ran and jumped down to welcome him, and there he stood in the doorway—radiant with smiles and happiness.—And Horace had to smile too!

“Very jolly, isn’t it, Horatio?—great joke my marrying Isabelle—I knew that you would laugh!” and in utter ignorance of his friend’s real feelings, Fred clasped his hands and rubbed them one over the other like a child—as he really was.

Horace bit his lips severely, this was his worst hour of trial.

“I say, old fellow, Isabelle didn’t seem

to like your congratulations much—I suppose she thought that they wern't warm enough, I suppose she thought that you were jealous," continued Fred.

"Jealous?" stammered out Horace, in profound astonishment, adding in his own mind—"Is it then possible, Fred was aware."

"Yes, jealous!" answered Keane, with the most smiling placidity, "fancied I shouldn't care so much for *you*—now I had her to love!"

"Ha!" answered Horace, with an ejaculation that was very like a sob.

"I don't know that she thought so," continued Fred, "but I dare say she did, it was so likely under the circumstances, that she *should* think you were jealous!"

Horace who always meant something by what he said, was too much agitated to remember how seldom Fred meant anything, and again he gave his friend a look of utter surprise, not to say suspicion.

"Was it?" said he, in a kind of gasp.

"Is it possible you don't see it was likely?" said Fred, looking astonished in his turn, but smiling in the most bland and happy manner imaginable.

Horace did not know what to say; for once in his life he was without an answer even for Fred.

"Really," said the happy man, "I shall have to explain; you look, Horatio, as if you hadn't the most distant idea what I could possibly mean—Isabelle might think you were jealous of *my* marrying her—because you might not like my leaving *you*—and you and I can't live together now? can we, old boy?"

"Not well," said Horace Leigh, in the bitterness of his heart.

"I don't think Isabelle would like it," said Fred, shaking his head very wisely—"do you?"

"I do not think she would," said Horace, in a low, fierce tone.

"I'm very sorry to leave you, Horatio; and under any other circumstances, I should

say it was my loss ; but as it is, you can't expect me to say it is—now, can you ?”

Horace Leigh could not answer this—it was a stab at his heart—and almost took away his breath. No inquisitor ever tormented his victim with more skill than Keane tortured his friend.

“ Our year is nearly up,” continued Fred, “ so I hope I shan’t annoy you in any way, old fellow; as it turned out it was lucky for me you arranged we should take this place for one year only ; I’m sure this time last year I little thought that I should marry Isabelle !—did you ?”

“ I cannot say I did !” answered his friend, in a low tone of suppressed emotion.

“ I’m a lucky man,” continued Fred : “ now *don’t you think I am?*—to marry Isabelle !”

“ I do, indeed,” replied the man who really loved her.

“ What very short answers you do give me,” said Fred ; “ you are quite odd. I say, Horace, I do believe, that after all, now, you are jealous.”

"What have I, Fred, to make me jealous?" said Horace, in a tone of the deepest irony.

"You are jealous that I shall be married first!" laughed Fred, with one of his silliest laughs. "You can't deceive me, Horace—and you never could; I understand you thoroughly."

"Thoroughly, indeed!" replied poor Horace, with a sigh, that would not be suppressed.

"And you haven't asked me when it is to be," said Fred, in a pettish voice. "I don't believe you care!"

Horace gave a slight start; he had not thought of the marriage yet—as being very near.

"When? is the time fixed—already?" answered he.

"Oh, yes," said Fred, smiling more than ever—"the time, though not the day—next month. Poor Sir Josiah is so worried and embarrassed, I wish to take her out of it as soon as possible."

And Fred took the credit of this, though everything was being managed for him; and

he was as helpless as possible, in the manœuvring hands of Lady Walgrave.

"Are they in Town?" asked Horace, anxious to know the worst.

"Oh, no—they have been at Boulogne, ever since we were engaged. Why, you know that—you knew I had been over; how very odd you are."

"If you had been passing through such sad scenes—suffering, Fred, so much as I have, in so many ways, I think that even you might appear odd."

"Poor fellow," said his friend, grasping his hand—"I beg your pardon; I really feel for you."

But Horace did not return the pressure of the friendly hand; he really could not do it at that moment.

"Ah, you're offended now!" said Fred, in a piteous voice; "and I'm sure I hav'n't an idea what I have done."

That was a deeper truth than he was aware of.

"Oh, at Boulogne—are they?" said Ho-

race, remembering the circumstances now.  
“ I shall not see her !”

“ No !—you’ll be sorry for that, I know,” said Fred; “ but you can see as much of her as ever you like, after we’re married !”

“ Thank you,” said Horace, in the same bitter irony.

“ There’s one thing I object to,” said Fred, in an earnest and serious manner. Every trace of a smile had vanished: and his voice had quite an altered sound; so that Horace looked up in expectation, and eagerly enquired—

“ What can that be ?”

“ Why,” answered Fred, with an expression of something like disgust upon his handsome face, which was very astonishing —“ why, that continual going over to Boulogne—it spoils it all; it does make me so ill.”

“ Pshaw !” said Horace, with an impatience he could neither controul or conceal.

“ Ah—but it’s no joke,” replied his friend; “ it’s almost enough now at the

time to make me wish I had remained an independent bachelor, and a free man."

A look of grief for her came over the expressive face of Horace, as he thought—

"What a man this is to cherish and protect *my* Isabelie—as she might have been."

And the contraction as from sharp pain upon all his features was so remarkable, that Fred—enquired if he was ill !

But he mastered even that pang, and said...

"So you will be married in a month ; and ...how will you live ?"

"Ah—that's what I don't know—precisely," answered Fred. "You must advise me as to that—indeed you must ; for I can't think ! But we shall manage, I suppose, like other people, *somehow*!"

"Ha !" ejaculated Horace—"and you want *me* to plan for you !"

"Why, who else should ?" said Fred, in a state of great and natural surprise—"you always have arranged all my affairs."

"Your—wife,"—he *did* pronounce the word—"must do that for you now."

"True," answered Fred—"I didn't think of that. Oh—we shall be all right. And perhaps she might not like your interference—yours, in particular, I mean."

"Why not?" said Horace, with a great effort.

"Why, to tell you the truth, as a great secret—only I think you ought to know it, as I have found it out: and it bothers me very much, and is very unlucky, and all that: but it is not my fault, Horace—and I should be very sorry if you should think it was, because it annoys me just as much as it will you—but I really am afraid, from little things I have observed, that Isabelle does not like you!"

"Indeed!" said his friend, in a low, hoarse voice; "what have you seen to make you fancy that?"

"Why," declared Fred, "she certainly doesn't like my even mentioning your name!"

"Indeed," replied Horace Leigh—and the hand which rested on the table shook visibly.

“ More than once when I’ve been talking about you, I have observed—you know how I see things—nothing escapes me!—I have observed she would go out of the room. Very often, you know, seeing so much of one another, I really had nothing to say, *except about you*; and I have known her frown—you must remember that she never frowns; in short, she cannot bear even to hear of you.”

“ What does it signify ?” answered Horace Leigh.

“ Nothing to you—but a great deal to *me*,” said Fred, in an injured tone ; “ it doesn’t of course, matter to *you*, who don’t care for her ; but it is to me a great and horrible annoyance, that you and Isabelle—”

“ What ?” enquired Horace.

“ Can’t even be friends,” said Fred.

He had stumbled unawares upon a truth.

“ To care for only two people in the world, and to find that one of them dislikes the other, is really very hard. I say, Horatio, do me a favour now, will you ?”

" Well, what is it to be ?" asked Horace.

" Do try now, when we're married, to make Isabelle like you better than she does ? You can be such an agreeable fellow, when you please : I can't think how she *can* dislike you."

" What does it matter...*now !*" said Horace Leigh.

## CHAPTER VI.

AFTER her long and tedious illness, the health of Mrs. Trevor began at last to improve in a rapid manner ; and when her strength was sufficiently restored to enable her to bear the journey—which, before railroads existed was no inconsiderable effort to an invalid—the family returned to Town.

Some consolation was at hand for Horace ; and he eagerly sought for one of his conferences with Blanche ; a meeting far more

dreaded by her than it was by him ; he felt that he should at last be able to pour out his feelings : they had been gathering such strength in his enforced silence : for in whom could he put confidence as he could in Blanche ! to whom could he show his weakness as to Blanche ! but she dreaded the sight of his misery.

Blanche sat there in her drawing-room in her deep mourning for his father—sorrow and watching over her mother had made her pale, and the black dress made her look more so. She looked both sad and ill; she felt such real and tender sympathy with those she loved that their sufferings became literally hers ; and this peculiarity procured her many friends, she was beloved by many—by all, but Horace ; and he esteemed her !

He entered the room with a quick and agitated step unannounced, and he walked up to her—for her nervousness was so great she could scarcely come forward as usual to meet him, but she put out both her hands in silence, and lifted her deep expressive

eyes to his with such a look of tearful feeling that the sympathy refreshed—calmed and consoled him in some degree—even before she had spoken.

He threw himself into an arm chair which was his place; had been in many a merry conference before he had seen Isabelle, in many an agitating one since then ; he could not stand the remembrance, he buried his face in his hands, and in the deep security of all his confidence in Blanche, the weakness of his heart prevailed, the long pent up emotions would have their way, and tears fell through his clasped fingers. To look upon this was very painful to poor Blanche, they were upon no terms of easy familiarity : She felt a hesitation—but she took his hand in hers, and pressed it for a moment, to let him know how much she suffered with him.

He did not remove the other from his face quivering with emotion—he did not return the friendly grasp, not from a want of affection this time, but because his feelings of bitter mortification as the whole course of

events and conversations past before him were too completely absorbing his attention.

“Blanche, Blanche!” at last he said, “all this is my doing—if I had but listened to you! if Isabelle had certainly known I loved her, this—all this—might have been otherwise. I have destroyed my happiness, and Blanche I verily believe *hers also*.”

“I can believe it,” said she in a low voice, “it is but too probable.”

“It puts me into a despair almost too great to be endured,” said Horace, “to look back and see what a chain of mere trifles has ended in this misery, any one of which if done—or left undone, might and would have made me happy. I feel as if some strange, remorseless Fate—such as they believed in, in old times, Blanche—had been pursuing, leading, blinding me to my own ruin, some most malignant destiny—”

“Oh, do not say such things!” said Blanche, clasping her hands, “remember, Horace, for it must comfort you, that we are

in the hands of One who shapes our projects as may be *best* for us."

"I cannot think that—yet," said Horace.

"The day may come," said Blanche.

"Never," replied Horace, for his was the religion of the world: and that gives no comfort in adversity. "Never shall I cease to mourn over this trial, Blanche, for I am crushed for life."

His very frame was altered, his upright mien was gone, the lofty carriage of the head which gave to him such an attractive look of honest frankness, was gone too—his walk had lost its quick, elastic, hopeful step, there was the uncertain pace of one without an aim—a look of mortified affection could be traced in the eyes which no longer beamed with happiness; in the downward lines of the once smiling mouth. Horace Leigh had said the truth, for he looked broken down.

This first great disappointment which was Horace Leigh's bitterest trial, had indeed, as he himself expressed it, well nigh, crushed him for life.

He had literally *crept* through his usual every day existence *with Fred*, as if his blood ran cold within his veins, and as if no life except that of mere mechanical motion remained to him.

His manner, his voice, all bore the marks of some great humiliation; the terrible necessity of hearing Fred expatiate on his happiness was more than he could bear, and making the excuse that he required change of air, he went to the most quiet and retired place that he could hear of, and day by day and hour by hour he wandered by the shore—soothing by Nature's harmonies the discords of his own heart. He rose early in the morning—for the restlessness of his mind made him feverish and wakeful—and baring his head to the refreshing breeze, he would walk far and fast along the sands, sure at that early hour of meeting no one but a fisherman of the coast—with a quick and agitated step he would walk forth, but by degrees, as the breeze fanned him, and the ever recurring yet everchanging motion of

the waves attracted his gaze, the anxious and wretched look would by degrees pass from his eyes: as he listened to the gentle gushing and rushing of the waters as they broke in their tiny summer billows upon the shingles their predecessors had left behind them—the grieved and broken hearted look would vanish from his fine countenance and Horace Leigh would raise his eyes up to the heavens, and watch the sunbeams break forth from the light summer clouds which shaded their radiance, with a feeling of less bitter hopelessness, and he would return with a quieter step and a less unquiet heart.

There were days in which the sea had this effect upon him. And there were days when a sudden change of scene was produced by a sudden change of weather—days when the wind, most prevalent upon that coast, raged with unusual fury; when the boats were gladly brought for shelter to the sands, when none but hardy fisherinen would care to tread the shore; then Horace would go forth regardless of the inclement wind,

and wander up and down alone and out of sight, marking how different the quiet sea-side looked—now in the summer storm.—He watched the heavy clouds driven forcibly along, and thought how he had been driven on ; to his own bitter grief—he watched the sea so placid and so calm, but three days since ; now lashed and tossed, and driven in masses on the shore—rushing and devouring, as it seemed, the very masses of shingle, whose feet they had seemed to kiss submissively but a few days before—devouring with frantic eagerness, then rushing back as wildly as it came—leaving some portion of its waters to gurgle through the stones.

Then he went farther on, and there, the waves were crowding to attack, as it would seem, the solid rocks which jutted out into the ocean—they rushed, and dashed up against the opposing point of the small bay, and covered it with spray—till, as if irritated by the obstacle, the whole sea for a space was covered with foam ; as if the difficulties maddened the angry billows.—And Horace

watched the strife of waters, and his heart beat high, for all that impotent striving of the waves, ever advancing and ever driven back, reminded him of the workings of his own despair, and had there been any human creatures to look upon him they must have grieved to see the expression of anguish upon that young and intellectual face.

Then by degrees Horace would learn to feel—his passionate feelings were as vain—as the wrath of the waves dashing upon the rocks: and he would return more calm and still—the convulsive trembling of his lip—the unconscious working of his fevered hands would cease—and he would be quieter in his despair.

Then came other days and other winds, and they would make the waves dance with a gentle but exhilarating motion, and the sun would glance merrily upon them by day, and in the summer nights the moon, with her holy light, would streak the waters with such a pure and calming radiance that as Horace Leigh stood there; by slow degrees—

the restlessness would leave him, and peace returned to his crushed heart. A communing with Nature is the best worldly cure for grief.

Meanwhile Fred was paying one of his visits at Boulogne. Isabelle was sitting doing nothing ; with a book open but unread in her fair hands ; wishing exceedingly that she could go on with it without being positively rude ; and Fred was sitting in a lower chair, almost at her feet, looking up at her with his child-like eyes, thinking that she was sadly altered.

“ Well, dear ?” said he, interrogatively, “ have you nothing to say to me ?”

“ Nothing,” said Isabelle, shaking her head.

Fred had been so accustomed to be amused by Blanche and Horace, that he began to find he missed their clever merriment, so he looked disappointed and looked down.

“ Oh, yes ! I have—I had forgotten,” said Isabelle, putting her hand up to her

head—"I do believe I am losing my memory! I am quite absent—"

"*Absence* makes the heart grow fonder," said Fred, in a vacant manner, smiling in his gentle and foolish way.

"Not in that sense!" said Isabelle laughing.

"Isn't it?" said Fred, feeling and looking puzzled, yet willing to take everything or anything for granted, rather than take the trouble of thinking.

"Rather witty though," said Isabelle.

"Was it indeed," said Fred, "that's jolly!"

And for this kind of foolishness she had exchanged the sparkling and fascinating conversation of poor Horace.

Yet Isabelle was fond of Fred, though it was rather with the love of a young mother for a beautiful child, than with the "looking up affection" a woman ought to feel for her intended lord and master.

"I had forgotten it again!" said Isabelle,

"I had a message from papa, he wants to speak to you on business, Fred, at three or four to-day."

"Oh, bother!" answered Fred.

"How droll you are," replied his gentle lady love.

"I'm sure I don't mean it, my Belle," said Fred, "the very name of business is horrible to me, I know nothing about it—never did; if business must be done really;—I must send for Horace Leigh!"

Isabelle could not command herself even yet at the sudden mention of that name—she started visibly—and the lovely rose-like colour faded entirely from her cheeks.

Fred watched her, sharply for him, and the knowledge that he was doing this sent the blood rushing back in a deep blush over her face, forehead, and throat.

"Good gracious!—I couldn't have believed it!" muttered Fred.

And Isabelle dared not ask him what he meant.

"Promise me one thing when we're

married," said Keane, in a grave and almost authoritative manner—"promise—"

"I will—if I can," said his young lady-love.

"Promise, or I shall be very angry," said Fred, in evident earnest.

Poor Isabelle was really terrified ; she did not know what could be coming ; she could not even guess ; but this was a strange mood of Fred's ; and with the yielding to other peoples' wills, which was her weakness, she stammered out—

"I will."

"Then promise me," said Fred, "that when we're married, Isabelle, you will try to like Horace Leigh."

Isabelle's astonishment was so great, and she looked up in his face with such a strange expression, that Fred could make nothing of it ; so after looking at one another for a moment in silence, he said—

"I dare say you will find it impossible, and all that, but still, remember you have promised."

It was a strange thing to Isabelle to have to promise *that*.

There was a pause : Fred was thinking, and so was his fair lady-love; neither of them thought often, or much—and now their reveries were not agreeable.

“ I say, my Belle,” said Fred, addressing her by a pet name, which *he* thought rather good—“ I say, don’t you think I could cut ?”

“ What ?” enquired she.

“ This business bother,” answered Fred.

“ I don’t know, I am sure,” replied the young girl—“ how should I know !”

“ I’m sure I can’t be answering questions, and all that,” said Fred ; “ what can he have to say !”

“ If it will be any advantage to you to have some idea, I can tell you,” answered she. “ Papa is going to ask you where you mean to live.”

“ I dont know,” said Fred ; “ upon my soul, I hav’n’t thought of it.”

Isabelle laughed ! She was too young to

see on what a reed she was about to lean —for life.

“ I say,” said Fred, “ what *shall* we do ?”

“ Perhaps mama can tell us,” said the young girl, who had been brought up with the most undoubting faith in her mother’s cleverness.

“ Ah, that will do,” said Fred. “ But don’t you think it would look better if it came from me ?”

“ Why, certainly it would,” laughed Isabelle ; “ but if you hav’n’t an idea !”

“ But I can write,” said Fred.

“ About houses ?” asked the bride elect.

“ No, no—ask what we had better do... write off...to Horace Leigh.”

Poor Isabelle was altogether silenced by this ; if Horace had ever cared for her... which she had learnt to think was not the case...he must feel that !...She did.

Much to poor dear Fred’s annoyance, and a little to his alarm, he had to get on as well as he could in the formidable interview with his father-in-law in prospect.

Sir Josiah was anything but happy. Certain papers, necessary to the clearing up, in some degree, of his affairs, necessary to prove how much he really was involved and answerable, were not forthcoming. Sir Josiah had trusted too much to Mr. Simmons ...the enthusiast himself had trusted too much to others ; and the affairs were entangled more and more by the circumstance that Mr. Simmons had gone, no one knew whither, and had in all probability taken these important papers with him...at all events, they were not to be found ; and till they were, a doubt must hang over the liabilities of Sir Josiah...at least, this was the impression upon *his* mind.

To one so sanguine, a doubt was a hope ; and yet it was so little encouraged, or rather so checked by his lawyers, that it scarcely could be called a hope. Nevertheless when he saw more of Fred, his conscience smote him in some degree to think he had promoted and approved the marriage of his darling Isabelle with one, who to say the least of

him, would be but a blind guide for her on their joint pilgrimage. It was this last conviction that induced him to question his future son-in-law as to what his plans might be. And Frederick did not know !

He was however, very diplomatic...wonderfully so...on the occasion. Instead of openly avowing that little fact, he put a bold face on the matter, and said that he should have made "some arrangements or other in a few days, which he would at once communicate to Sir Josiah."

That is to say, he should by that time—hear from Horace !

And with that Sir Josiah was obliged to rest content.

Horace received the letter—and did not answer it : he really could not do that; so Fred, in a very cross and pettish humour, declared to Isabelle—

" That it was very ill-natured of Horatio ; why couldn't he give me advice about that—as he has always done—about everything else ! it was very unaccountable. I have never

done anything for years without consulting him."

And Isabelle bit her lips, and thought, with no small bitterness—

"So then! Mr. Leigh was consulted by Fred, and Horace must have *advised* him to marry me!" This sad idea went farther to blot out the last vestige of her former affection, than anything that had yet occurred ...the thought poisoned the feeling.

She did not know that Fred's proposal to her had been the only action of his life, in which he had *not* consulted his friend, she could not suppose that.

And so we go on stumbling through life —supposing this, and fancying that, acting accordingly, when if we did but know the truth, all things would seem so different—but that which should reach our ears, does not:and that which ought not ever to be known, is told; perhaps in kindness: and we feel our way through life, in a perpetual state of blindness, when if we did but know the truth, the surface of our whole existence would be changed, as if by magic.

"I'll tell you what, my belle," continued Fred, "in spite of that horrible steamer, I must go back to town and talk it over."

"Oh no!" said Isabelle, with involuntary eagerness; "surely you need not ask him!"

"Oh, but I must," said Fred; "all this is very mysterious to me—but I have found it out—I always do see things—no one can deceive me. Horace dislikes *you*, Isabelle, as much as you hate him! It's rather hard to visit it on me—it isn't *my* fault, at all events, and so I shall tell him."

Isabelle burst into tears, she had essentially a woman's character with all its gentle weaknesses—and amongst others, ready tears.

"Now don't be silly, dear," said Fred, totally mistaking the cause of her agitation; "don't cry pet! there can be no danger in my going over, this fine weather—and though of course you can't bear parting with me—I shall be back in a few days, and so you need not cry!"

Fred always fancied he saw everything! and as he walked up and down the steamer, he thought he certainly had found it all out —no doubt about that.

“ Horatio, I dare say you won’t like what I am going to show you,” said the helpless *fiancé*; “ but I do.”

And he brought out with a childish glee and triumph, a red morocco case.

Horace felt that it must be a wedding gift for Isabelle—and that the best thing he could do, would be to look at it at once, but he was not prepared for what he saw ; it was an exquisite life-like picture of Isabelle—he stood entranced as it were, the spell which that fair face had always exercised over his mind, returned for a moment in all its force—there were the full and soft dark eyes, with their remarkable expression —they always had a pleading and imploring look, and there it was, deprecating as it were, his anger for her conduct. The lovely face was sadder than when he *remembered* it, for all that had past between them, now

seemed so long ago, all that remained to him of her, was—memory; but there were the delicate features, the heavy bands of dark and glossy hair, the classical outline and the Madonna-like expression. For a few moments he forgot every thing but the present, and as his eyes seemed to meet hers, as they had often done, the tender look which always had come into his eyes, in those past happy days, stole into them again; the sad contraction of the brow, which had become habitual to him of late, faded away, and for a moment, a few brief seconds, Horace fancied he was gazing upon her once again, and he was happy.

Fred watched him, and gazed so earnestly, that Horace, when he looked up was absolutely startled.

“ Ha, ha !” said Keane; “ you like the picture ?”

“ Indeed—I do, it is—well—painted !” answered Horace.

“ You can’t deceive me,” said Fred; “ I pique myself on that, so clever as you are.”

“ What *can* you mean,” said Horace, a gleam of hope, mad as it was, crossing his mind.

“ You like the picture, *better than the original,*” said Fred.

“ Ah,” answered Horace, with a gasp ; “ you have—found that out !”

And Fred laughed out in triumph, the helpless man in all his ignorance had reason to be vain glorious, though he knew it not, for he *had* triumphed over his friend.

“ And now old fellow I must tell you, that I am come over, have taken all that trouble expressly and solely to ask your advice, and you must sit down there and give it me, as you always have done, or I shall think, I don’t know what !”

He really did not know what he thought or meant ; if anything, it struck him Horace was so odd, he might be going mad, but the hint had such an effect upon the excited mind of his friend, that he sat down, as he was desired, to enter upon, and to

advise, upon the plans of Fred and his Isabelle.

But before he began to talk, the temperate Horace poured himself out nearly a tumbler full of sherry and drank it off. The sight of her picture and above all the sight of Fred smiling at it, kissing it and putting it away *as his*, had been too much for him, harassed as he had been for months.

"Well now, Horatio," said the engaged man, "we are to be married very soon—and Sir Josiah wants to know my plans—and you must settle something for us—I can't you know—I never did."

"Your income, Fred?" asked Horace.

"Why you know as well as I do, and very likely better."

"No more?" said Horace, lifting up his face in great astonishment.

"No more," said Fred, in a decided manner, "I thought of course that Sir Josiah would have given her a handsome fortune, or at least allowance—only those

two daughters and no son, or else—I shouldn't very likely—have proposed."

Horace winced visibly at this.

"And I told you," continued Fred, "that Sir Josiah was embarrassed to a great degree with his fondness for pumps and screws, and all that—Some man he trusted has cheated him confoundedly—good man, Sir Josiah, but not what *I* call clever."

And Horace could scarcely help smiling at that opinion.

"He didn't see through that fellow Simmons," said "Fred, and *I* wasn't at that time intimate enough to say—or *see* anything," added he.

"And so?" enquired Horace.

"And so—she has no fortune---none---just fifty pounds allowance: Sir Josiah is quite done up---Country house and town house both given up and let, and he is obliged to go abroad, and stay abroad---in short he is a ruined man---and I proposed rather too soon!"

Horace looked at his friend with a fierce

glance at this, and yet Fred meant no harm, he only said what any other man would say !

“ I found this out, all this,” said Keane, “ after I was accepted, and I believe, perhaps, if it had not been for this coming down in the world so unexpectedly I might not have been so readily accepted by—”

The colour flew over Horace’s face in the deepest blush of glad emotion, this at least in some degree accounted---he had not heard of this before---it must have been visible indeed to be discovered by Fred.

“ Accepted by ?” enquired Horace, hoping to hear *her* name.

“ By Sir Josiah !” answered Fred. “ The fact is, I don’t consider I have been particularly well-treated by him, and as to Lady Walgrave—I ought not to say such a thing of Isabelle’s mother ; but *she* caught at me—actually *caught* at me !”

Delightful this for his listener to hear.

“ And so,” repeated Horace, really aghast, “ you are marrying her on your own income,

and ask me how you are to live—the question, Fred, is one it is not in my power to answer—I only know—I wouldn't and couldn't have married her on double *your* income, Fred."

And he walked up and down in great and bitter agitation—so great that he all but forgot himself.

"Ah! but," said Fred, "you didn't care for her—I do."

Horace said nothing, but he clenched his hand until the nails wounded his palm.

"And then besides," said Fred, "she was in every comfort—she was rich;—but I am not taking her from anything *now*."

This piece of plain sense from Frederick's lips was another pang.

Horace *might* have made her rich and happy, now, when she wanted it—now when she would no longer be so—and all this was...his fault.

"Well! what *am* I to do," said Fred, looking up in his helpless way.

"Find out a quiet place abroad...live in

the quietest way...economise to the utmost...you cannot live with your habits and with hers in England."

" You don't say so," said Fred, in serious amazement. " What couldn't we keep a house, and all that sort of thing like everybody else."

" I fear not," said Horace, " some people might; but you could not."

And he was greatly disturbed at this sad prospect for *his* Isabelle.

" Why shouldn't we? if other people can," said Fred, lifting up his eye-brows.

Horace was puzzled, for he could not tell him he was the nicest and the silliest creature in the world! but he contrived to answer—

" She is so young, and you so inexperienced, Fred!"

" Dear me," said he, quite in despair, " I thought you would set us all right!—I shall be wretched, miserable quite, abroad."

" Wretched—with *her*," said Horace, getting up and pacing the room.

"*Abroad*," said Fred, "just think of something else...now do!"

And Horace, who was conscious he might have recommended their remaining on the Continent—because he should not see them ...thought a moment, and replied—

"There are cheap parts of the country, Fred; Devonshire, quiet villages where you might live, at least people *do* live, in comfort too; but not such petted, spoilt children, Fred, as you and Isabelle."

"Ah, well, then, we shall do—I knew we should," said Fred, exultingly. "We can pass our honeymoon abroad; and then—you can find us some quiet place, Horatio! And then, besides, if ever Sir Josiah should get over these embarrassments of his, he would do much for us—he told me that; and in that case we shall be rich—comparatively speaking. I never thought of these things, Horace; for I always looked to you—to think for me; and now that I begin to see it all—and find she has no fortune—I am

almost tempted, Horatio, that I am, to wish—I never had proposed."

Horace could not stand this ; his blood boiled in his veins, with anger and indignation.

" Do not say that ; do not let me hear you express such feelings," said he, in a low tone. " You are a happy man. Value your own exceeding happiness."

Fred was astonished—so surprised, that he said nothing.

" I will do my best to think what you had better do."

If it had been any one but his own lost Isabelle, Horace would have warned Fred of his excessive imprudence in marrying at all ; but as it was he was afraid to trust himself. He really could not tell how far his feelings might bias his opinions.

Fred returned to Boulogne ; and Fred and Isabelle were married.

She was a lovely bride ; but tears were more familiar to her that day than smiles.

A week before their wedding-day,

Horace, who had refused to be his friend on the day, because he was in such deep mourning, received a letter from poor Fred in great trouble.

“ MY DEAR HORATIO,

“ I am in great and real distress. What with the presents and expenses, I am stranded—actually at a loss. I must have ready money for our wedding tour—I must give Isabelle some comforts. I cannot raise the money yet ; I never thought of it—in time. I never yet borrowed a farthing of you, Horace, so help me now ; a friend in need, you know, and all that sort of thing.

“ If you don’t lend me two hundred pounds I sha’n’t know what on earth to do ; or if you can’t do that, just lend me one hundred or so.

“ Yours,

“ Ever obliged,

“ FRED.”

So Horace furnished means for Isabelle’s wedding tour with Fred !

## CHAPTER VII.

THE fire was burning bright and clear in a little front parlour of a small house in Islington ; a very bright kettle was smoking and bubbling upon the bars, occasionally sending out little jets of boiling water, to the imminent peril of the child of seven or eight, who was sitting on a wooden stool, by the fender ; and once, to her very great discomposure, hitting the cat, who, with the confidence of an established favorite,

was stretching her limbs out, to an extent of which they did not seem capable. Poor puss jumped up on feeling the scalding drops through her thick and sleeky fur, and with a scream of dismay, jumped into the lap of the child.

The kettle evidently thought it odd that no one came to take it off the fire; every thing was ready: the tea things were set: bread and a home-made cake were spread upon the table: a large plate of toast was keeping itself warm by the fire. There were more candles than usual, lighting up the walls, and showing in full beauty the pictures, which, with or without frames, nearly concealed their surface; flowers decked the little chimney-piece; everything was in order; in fact, there was to be a tea-party in that little room; but as yet no one was there, except indeed the child and puss, who was so completely one of the family, that not to mention her as such would be an unkindness wholly undeserved and unprovoked.

Presently the door opened, and in came a pretty, interesting girl of two or three and twenty, who had just completed her simple toilette. She looked round the room, and felt quite satisfied with the comfortable appearance of it; just behind her entered a very neat and still very attractive looking woman of about five and forty, who after a sharp glance round, nodded approval at the young girl.

“ You like the arrangements, aunt ?” enquired she.

“ Very much—everything quite genteel ; your bringing up has made a lady of you, Sophy ; and though James is a good young man, and very well to do in the world, he’s not a bit too good for you, if he is enough.”

“ Oh, aunt, don’t say so ; I am a very lucky girl—an orphan here, dependent, as you will have me so, upon you and my uncle—for he has been an uncle to me—not allowed to go to service, or work for myself, I think it was a lucky thing for *you*.”

“ To get rid of you, Sophy ?” asked the

Aunt ; " you will be a great loss to me, but I must not be selfish and think of that."

" You need not think of it, aunt, for, a long, long time yet," said Sophy, coloring ; " James and I can't be married yet ; that is to say it might be foolish and imprudent, at least I tell him so."

" Well, well, I like young people to be engaged when once they wish it, it sobers them and steadies them ; only whenever you do marry, what will become of me and the children, I don't know !—It certainly has come rather suddenly upon me. I'm sure now, this time last week I hadn't the least idea what James was always coming here about, so often. I really thought he came to see the pictures ; it only shows one doesn't get wiser as one gets older, Sophy, and that is setting a bad example to one's children ; how late your uncle is—the toast will be all spoilt, I do declare," and the comely and kind-hearted mistress of the little house at Islington, which small as it was, was a home

and a happy one to her and hers—bustled about in an agitation about the toast.

Just then there came a knock at the door and the mistress of the house ran to the little passage to open it. Sophy, with a deep blush upon her fair young face, waited quietly where she was—"it might be James," who was coming to tea, as her accepted lover, for the first time ; and she felt shy, and very much inclined to hide herself behind something or somebody, but as there was nobody there except the child and puss, she sat quite still with her head down, looking very foolish.

Some one came in ; there was a taking off of coat or even coats, in the small passage, and then some one entered the room, poor Sophy's blushes were all wasted and thrown away, it was her uncle.

"And what made you so late ?" enquired his smiling and good tempered wife.

"Them omnibusses—the'eve a spite against me, that they have, they never go

when *I* gets into em, never," said Mr. Spildin ; for, the house was his, the wife was his, the niece was his, and the pictures were his.

" He, he, how droll you are," answered the still pretty Mrs. Spildin.

" Oh I'm in earnest though, I am, they'll be the death of me, if its only through worrit," said the little painter ; " only you look so smiling and so comfortable here and all so nice, and tea, and I'm so tried that them omnibusses shan't make me unhappy *here*, they shan't."

" And here comes James," said Mrs. Spildin, running again to answer the knock, whilst Sophy did not blush quite so much and looked a shade less foolish this time—she was getting used to it, but still she made her uncle laugh and chuckle, and declare " he never saw such a silly girl, *he* should not behave *so* he shouldn't."

" And what makes *you* so late ?" enquired the mistress of the house.

" I really am very sorry," apologised the

lover with his eyes fixed upon Sophy, “ but the omnibus....”

“ I told you so,” ejaculated Mr. Spildin ; “ he’s one of the family as one may say now you know—and so the omnibusses are behaving ill to him; well that beats every thing for spite, it do.”

“ Not altogether that,” smiled James Williams, who really was an excellent young man and rather above his station, which was that of a clerk to a young barrister ; “ but Mr. Leigh detained me on some business, and I had besides to take a note for him to Grosvenor Square, and that being so much out of the way, dear Sophy,” and he gave her a very devoted look, “ made me so late, which I did not wish to be *to-day* at least.”

“ Mr. Leigh—Grosvenor Square, putting the two together,” said Mr. Spildin, suiting the action to the word and putting one forefinger across the other, in a very wise and dogmatical manner.—“ *I* think I’ve seen your Mr. Leigh at my best pupil’s

there, Miss Trevor—Ah !” said he, drawing a long breath at the remembrance of the scene of his professional trials; “ *she* paint so clean, shedo—she’s an honor to me, *she* is.”

And they sat down to tea.

“ If I took heads off still,” observed the master of the house; “ there isn’t a head I should enjoy taking off so much as Mr. Leigh’s—and you’re his...”

“ Clerk,” replied James with a slight bow ; “ and thanks to his working so hard and being so clever, I am here to-night ! he makes so much already, that we shall be able, Sophy.....” here he whispered something, which made her first look shy and then look happy.

“ I’ve been with young Mr. Leigh ever since he began to practise,” said James, “ and he is so steady, for all that he is expecting a great fortune some day from his aunt, Mrs. Vernon, that he’s got quite a name already.”

“ Where does Mrs. Vernon live ?” enquired Sophy with a look of excitement on

her countenance which appeared to be quite uncalled for.

"At a fine place in —— Shire," answered her lover in some surprise at her question.

"Aunt, aunt!" said Sophy lifting up her hands and eyes, "is not that just the most extraordinary and wonderful coincidence you ever heard of?"

"Extraerdiary *what?* my dear," asked Mr. Spildin, "very hard word that; I hope you know what it means!—that's all---for *I dont*," he added to himself.

But no one at that moment attended to him. Mrs. Spildin was also in a state of astonishment lifting up her eyes, and James was wondering too much at them to think of anything else.

"The most extraordinary thing," echoed the aunt.

"*What?*" said Mr. Spildin, "when your eyes are come down from the ceiling," added he in his peculiarly graphic phraseology, "perhaps you'll have the kindness to tell us *what is what.*"

Still no one answered him.

"James," said Sophy, in quite a solemn voice, "is your Mrs. Vernon very ill?"

"Yes that she is, I heard Mr. Leigh telling his friend Mr. Keane he thought he must go down there to see her, and the note I took to Grosvenor Square was all about her illness too."

"My Mrs. Vernon is very ill," said Sophy, "so it *must* be the same, poor dear old lady, only to think that it should be the same!"

"Wife," said the artist, "its my philosophy that secrets is not secrets between a man and his wife, so if you've any—bring them out this moment, I won't eat another piece of toast till I know what you're all in this way about."

"Why," replied Mrs. Spildin, "do you remember my sister Hannah coming here to stay last year and being allowed by Mrs. Vernon to take Sophy there to stay; Hannah is such a favorite of the old lady's, and no wonder, she has lived with her from a girl,

*thirty years,* Spildin, she's older much than me, you know."

"Oh, I dare say," said the little artist looking provokingly unbelieving.

"Well, Mrs. Vernon is so fond of Hannah that she took a fancy to dear Sophy there, seeing her about the house, and Sophy used to read to her at times in the long evenings, and we could hardly get her back again."

"And I saw Mr. Leigh there," exclaimed Sophy, "and little thought—"

"Hold your tongue, child," said Mr. Spildin, nodding good-temperedly at her, "I want to hear your aunt."

"That upon *him* our marriage would depend," whispered James, finishing Sophy's sentence in a whisper at her ear.

"Well," said the mistress of the snug little parlour, "after you were gone out this morning, I got a letter from poor Hannah—in great distress—saying her dear, old mistress was so very ill, that she was tired out with waiting on her—that Mrs. Vernon wished her to have rest, but could not fancy

any soul being about her room except herself, and Sophy—if Sophy would go down to sit with her, and just help her aunt Hannah...the dear, old lady said she should feel comfortable, and be quite obliged—and so after crying a little about going away just now," said Mrs. Spildin, with a sly glance at James Williams, "Sophy determined, feeling very grateful for all the kindness she had received—determined, I say, on going down to help to nurse the kindest old lady in the world—"

" Beloved by everybody—"

" And to leave *me*," said James, looking so thoroughly unhappy that poor, little Sophy nearly cried again.

" What could I do, she was so kind, and couldn't bear any one to help, but me—and poor aunt Hannah is half dead with sitting up, and I am young and strong, and love them both very dearly, and when I thought I could be useful and grateful, James, that I was really wanted—that no one else could

do—though it was a struggle between duty and—”

“ What ?” asked James, in a low voice full of affection, “ shall I finish for you, Sophy ?”

“ You need not—you know what I mean,” she answered, continuing after a pause. “ Though it was a struggle, I thought you must esteem me less if I could at such a time be selfish—I knew after a moment’s thought *you* would not be so either, James, and so I wrote by the return of post, and go to-morrow, James.”

These last sentences had been spoken very low, and somehow or other, she only knew it was not her fault; she found her hand in his, and they went on whispering lower and lower, till Mr. Spildin, touching his wife’s elbow, said—

“ Just like us, my dear, it is.”

At this moment the kettle, which had been boiling away on the fire in a very decorous and peaceable manner—chose to

give out one of its extraordinary little jets of scalding water which as usual fell upon the unlucky cat, who again, and as usual, screamed, and jumping up on the chair, from thence sprung to the top of a kind of chiffoneer and sat there bolt upright, with her large eyes wide open with terror and pain ; the child who had been sitting by the fire very good and quiet, gave a lamentable howl, ending in a violent cry.

Mr. Spildin got up, and stopping his ears asked the child what was the matter ?— Having stopped his ears, he did not exactly hear what the child said, and gave him a shake to make him answer — having put down his hands, the natural consequence of it was, that through all the child's sobs and shakings, he heard it stammer :

“ The cat’s hurt, Par.”

“ Be quiet sir, or I’ll hurt *you*,” said the affectionate father, and giving the unlucky young gentleman, as *he* called him, a consi-

derable blow on the back, to keep him quiet! he ejaculated with some asperity.

“ What does it signify to you *who* is hurt, as long as *you* are not ?” and sat down with great dignity: he believed he had given his son a great moral lesson—he knew he had given him a good shaking—he piqued himself upon the management of his boys ; and so do a great many fathers—who manage them after the fashion of Mr. Spildin.

After a few seconds to recover his own breath and enable young Master Spildin to leave off the roar, which followed his father’s mode of instruction, the artist turned to his wife, and putting on a look of extreme sagacity, observed—

“ I flatter myself my dear, that I handle my sons as I do well as my brushes, I makes ’em go the way I wish ’em to go—and I should like to see the father that can do that always, I should—I never give a thump without a sentiment, and then I consider—

it literally knocks it into 'em ;—that boy there will never forget that he's not to mind other people being hurt, as long as he isn't. Its an opinion *you* don't approve of my dear, I see by your face, no more don't I the in general—only in the particular it's good—it is."

Here Mrs. Spildin shook her head, and was evidently about to speak, but her husband went on, before she could find space for a word.

"I'll prove it my dear, I will," and she resigned herself to listen—he was very fond of what she called "Laying down the law."

"That boy is the particular—I wouldn't have said that sentiment to Tom ; he'd have abused it—by *attending* to it, *he* would. I wouldn't have said it to you, my dear, you'd have abused it, long enough before you would have used it !—but that boy—he has a heart as soft as.....whitey brown paper when it's wet ; he'd rather be scalded himself, than scald the cat—and in the world

my dear, ones feelings is ;—no go—won't do. When he's a going in the world to pick up his living, he'll let everybody else pick it up afore his face, *he will!* he'll stop to help 'em—that I *do believe*, and so my dear my sentiments to him is different..."

"To what they ought to be," said Mrs. Spildin, in a quiet way, nodding and smiling at him.

"That is a sentiment I never expected to hear from you my dear," said the little artist, frowning in a majestic manner. "If the whole world thinks a man wrong, his wife oughtn't to—never : its the duty of 'em not to.—"

"Nonsense!" replied *his* wife.

And Mr. Spildin made no answer ; there were times when he saw his comely helpmate was tired of his philosophy and then he always and invariably stopped.

During the pause that followed, the cat returned, the child recovered its equanimity and the kettle appeared to take advantage of the calm, to send out two or three more

little jets of hot water, which, though luckily they hit nobody, did not pass unobserved.

"That kettle's a character," said Mr. Spildin ; "it is the most eccentricest piece of copper I ever see; it meant to hit that cat again, I do believe; it amuses itself with shots at that unfortunate animal, I know it do, it don't like boiling away on the fire, we make the room too hot to hold it and so it revenges itself upon the cat, all out of spite! John," continued he speaking to the child, in an awful voice "Never do nothing out of spite, never demean yourself to behaving like a poor brass kettle that knows no better than to revenge itself—a kettle may—but christians shouldn't never."

John opened his eyes very wide, and endeavoured to understand, but it was a matter of great doubt even to Mr. Spildin whether he did.

"Every one in this house is a character; I'm a character—no one can deny that—you're a character, and so on ; and it's often

been a doubt to me how one can be a character and have one, too!"

"Law, Mr. Spildin, I hope one can," said his fair spouse, looking alarmed.

"I've often wondered," said the artist, wandering off, in his odd way, at a word, from one thing to another, "whether it's more advisable to have a bad character or none; it's a debatable case, *I* think—I should like to argufy it over now, I should."

No one seemed disposed to take up the cudgels, so he argued it—with himself!

"In the first place, if you're a bad character you can make it worse; and if you have none you can't—that's proved, I think; rather it is. Losing one's character is a bad thing, aint it? well, if one hasn't none one *can't lose it*—that's a fact—it is a great, convincing argument. Well, if you've a bad one, you *can* make it better, though you're not very likely to try to—but if you have none, you can't make nothing of it—that's the other side; I'm a turning over

like a lawyer, James, ha, ha ; no character is a negative evil, ain't it ?”

“ I don’t know, I’m sure, what you mean,” said Mrs. Spildin, looking puzzled.

“ A bad character is a positive evil, ain’t it ?”

“ I don’t know : *being* positive is an evil,” answered his wife, looking very personal.

“ A positive evil is worse than a negative evil ; so having no character at all is better than having a bad one. I’d rather myself now, and I’d rather that any of this family should have no character at all, than—”

But Mrs. Spildin could hold out no longer —she could not have remained silent another moment for any inducement that this world could offer. Her feelings as a mother and a wife and an aunt, were all ruffled like feathers—she was really very irate—

“ Mr. Spildin,” she began—“ I wonder you’re not ashamed of yourself, to sit there in your own room, over your own tea, and say such things—putting such things into our heads ! Where can you

get your queer ideas from *I* can't tell ; and if they were only queer you'd be welcome to them, but they're wicked, downright wicked ; to think that you, a husband and a father, should dare, before your wife, and your niece, and your own child, to wish that we none of us had any character, I declare I am perfectly ashamed to hear you ; and as to James there, who isn't used to your philosophy, as you call it—your nonsense and stuff as I call it !—what he will think of it I am afraid to think ; he never will believe that you're always talking stuff. Oh, Mr. Spildin, your arguments will be the death of me some day, I tell you that !"

During this eloquent harangue the little artist sat perched upon his chair ; he tucked up his broad little feet on the front bars of the chair, and underwent the scolding and the remonstrances of his handsome and indignant wife in the very attitude, and with the very air of a naughty little boy.

When Mrs. Spildin had quite done, she looked at him, and there was about him

such a ridiculous look of frightened submission, that she was obliged to turn her head sharply away, lest he should see her usual bright smile upon her florid and good-tempered face.

" My dear," replied the artist, " I hav'n't the least idea how I've offended you ; what I said was merely an argufication with myself, as nobody else wouldn't argufy with me. I'm famous for my arguments ; I've often told you so, I have ; I mustn't get out of the habit of it ; so I was only argufying it out for practice ; but, my dear, if I've said anything likely to have an anti-moral effect upon the mind—the young mind—of that little fellow there, sitting with the cat—I beg your pardon, my dear, and I beg *his* pardon ; I can't do more."

" Certainly not," said Mrs. Spildin who had recovered her good humour ; " only with those arguments of yours, I know the day will come when you won't know right from wrong ! I'm always looking out for it, and with our family—it wouldn't do!"

"Never you fear my dear," said the painter brightening up again ; "I shall always know 'em apart, for I shall know that *I* am right and every body else is wrong!"

"I am very glad you think so, my love," said his wife, in a pleasantly ironical manner.

"Its comfortable my dear, if it isn't true," said the artist, who could not help smiling himself.

"Ah Spildin, Spildin!" said his wife ; "what a pity it is I can't shake all your nonsense out of *you* ; as you can shake that bless-ed child : and then I do declare, though nobody would think it, you'd be the best of men ! but really what concerns me so is, that that poor, dear child should hear....."

"What he don't understand," replied the artist smiling.

"Is that James there should hear....."

"*He* havn't heard a word," said Mr. Spildin ; "you *don't* suppose *they've* been a listening!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. SPILDIN had an idea that he was the master of his own house, and that he kept his boys in order ; but this was an idea, not altogether founded upon facts ; as far as little John was concerned, as long as he had the cat for a companion, he did not much care what else happened to him, or whose orders he obeyed ; he was of a naturally tractable disposition ; but with Tom, the son and heir to the house of Spildin, the

case was very different. Tom was “his father over again,” as people say, with the addition of his mother’s spirit ; so that, though he really had no harm in him, both father and mother were afraid of Tom.

The next morning, Mr. Spildin was as usual at work before breakfast, but his bustling wife was standing idle before him, although as Sophy was packing up her box, in her own little room, instead of doing the household work, her aunt had that morning much more to do than usual.

“ Love is such humbug,” said Spildin, making an ill-tempered dash with his brush at the trunk of a tree, which he was finishing, and doing his work some harm ; “ and jealousy’s worse.”

“ Very true my dear,” said his wife ; “ but young people, will be young people !”

This could neither be, “argufied,” or denied, so Mr. Spildin savagely observed : “ That if Tom had been older, he shouldn’t have wondered ; but as it was, he had no business to be so young as all that !”

To this lucid declaration, his wife observed that, "poor Tom couldn't make himself older or younger than he was!"

To which unanswerable fact, the angry artist replied—

"I didn't think my dear that any son of mine would have made such a fool of himself, as to fall in love."

"You were fool enough to do it yourself, my dear," quietly observed his wife.

"And never havn't repented!" said the artist, solemnly; "but Sophy never took notice of Tom—and you—encouraged me *dreadful*, you did," and he turned his ugly little face up towards his handsome wife, with such an expression of affectionate good humour, that *she* thought him quite good-looking.

"So you say, my dear," she answered, "but nobody believes you!"

"I say a man, or a boy like Tom, is a fool to care for a girl that don't care for him."

"I say, they can't always help it," said

Mrs. Spildin, “and nobody could suppose that Tom would take Sophy’s engagement so to heart—he wouldn’t have his tea!”

“Then he’s in airnest,” said the artist, shaking his head in a melancholy manner, “that’s a fact—it’s proved...I wanted Tom to see poor Sophy to the coach instead of me.”

“I don’t believe he’ll do it,” said his mother.

“No more don’t I,” replied his father.

“Poor Tom,” answered his mother, with all his queernesses she loved him much.

Tom was a strange looking, little fellow, awkward, and ugly; but as such unlucky people often are, clever and full of feeling. Sitting in his own little room, having turned John out, covering his queer face with his hands, poor Tom was in as real and touching a despair, as if he had been one of Nature’s favourites.

He verily believed himself to be the most wretched of boys; for though only seventeen he was desperately and deeply in love with

Sophy, and her recent engagement had made him most truly wretched...Tom was a poet! ...and instead of peaceably drinking tea with his successful rival..."a baseness" of which he had told his great friend "he was quite incapable" he had rushed out into the fields, and with the inspiration of hunger and thirst, had penned some despairing verses which he meant to put into Sophy's plate at breakfast. Poor Tom! within that uncouth frame of his, he had a heart; and with all his absurdities he had a mind above his station...unluckily for him.

Tom read his verses over to himself, and thought they were so moving that Sophy herself must feel them...he had compared her to a tigress! that was decidedly sublime ...was not a tiger the emblem of the greatest cruelty...yes! so Sophy was a tigress.

He had poured out his soul in verse, and it was time to go to breakfast. With his hair in disorder and a look of anguish, Tom took his cup; he cast a glance at Sophy, but she was looking much as usual...she did

not care about his wretchedness...not she ! he was enraged ; he would not that morning help her with the kettle...no ! he let her take the heavy machine "with those dear, little fingers," he let her pour the water into the tea-pot, and it was no slight exertion ... he let her do it all herself, and gloried in it ! he was tasting the sweets of revenge in a small way. He wouldn't eat...he had determined not to eat...miserable as he was he felt he ought not...it wasn't the thing... he was angry with himself for wishing it, but he couldn't help *that*, he had had no tea, and no man is always master of his own thoughts.

He looked at Sophy, and it was evident she was not thinking about him...So why should he starve himself for one who didn't care for him, who didn't even see whether he ate or not ! this thought was so pathetic that he felt inclined to cry ; but suddenly he changed his mind, and in a spirit of angry defiance, resolved to eat his breakfast ...which he did.

There was something so awful and portentous in this unnatural silence from Tom, who generally talked a great deal too much, that his father and mother were quite alarmed, both for themselves and him...he was a genius, and they did not know what might happen, they couldn't guess what under the circumstances he might think it right to do, nobody could guess that; but they felt quite certain he wouldn't take Sophy to the coach !

Mrs. Spildin's mind was rather relieved when she saw Tom slip a paper into Sophy's plate when she went for the kettle, because she knew it must be verses ; and when Tom had written lines upon anything that occurred to put him out...he was always *quieter*... till then he was almost dangerous was Tom, he was such a genius.

Poetry is a safety valve to those who have a genius and a temper, and the two very often go together...Mrs. Spildin did not know what a safety valve was, though she had heard of a safety cab ; but she would

have quite agreed in the opinion, and from experience, for as she observed to her husband—

“ Writing that nonsense always did Tom good...it got it out of him !”

So they all sat there at their eight o'clock breakfast, and Sophy must be at the coach at ten, and nobody dare ask Tom to take her! for he having once began his breakfast went on so much longer than anybody, and kept sending John for more butter, and then for more bread, for such a time that they began to think he never would have done.

Mr. Spildin looked at his wife, and she looked at him, and he nodded at her, and she shook her head; but still they said nothing.

They thought they had better wait till Sophy was gone out of the room; if Tom should break out into one of his odd rages before her, she might not like it.

Sophy asked Tom if he would have some more tea, to which he replied—“ certainly

not" with a very uncalled for sharpness of manner, and then she locked up the tea and sugar, gave the keys to her aunt, and with the willing assistance of little John she had soon cleared away the breakfast, made up the fire, and then smiling at her aunt she left the room, John following her as he always did, when he could, like a dog—he followed her, and the cat followed him.

Tom saw that something was coming, and tried to remember what Lord Byron would have been likely to do under the circumstances; but he could not find out: so he went up to the fire and tried to lean his elbow on the chimney-piece, but he could not comfortably reach it—so he stood in an attitude of defiance waiting for what was to come.

"My dear Tom," said Mr. Spildin, "it will be a great inconvenience to me if it will—"

But Tom interrupted him...

"*Inconvenience*," said he, in a tone of

bitter contempt, "what's inconvenience to misery?...nothing."

"I'm glad you will think it's nothink," said his father, brightening up, "for I want you, though I know it may be inconvenient to *you*...to go with Sophy—"

"With Sophy?...*I* go with Sophy?...never again...nowhere," said Tom, stopping between his words in a very melo-dramatic way.

"I have an engagement," said the father.

Tom winced visibly.

"Engagement; that word cuts me in two—*Sophy's* engaged! don't let me hear that word," said Tom, distractedly.

"You shan't, my dear," said his mother, "do, Spildin, hold your tongue, and let *me* tell poor Tom...Why do you use such language to him."

"I didn't mean to lacerate his feelings," said the artist in a penitential tone; "I know what it is to be lacerated—engagement's such a common word."

Tom looked at his mother, for he wanted her to pity him, at this renewed annoyance—and gave a sigh.

"You're wanted my dear boy," explained Mrs. Spildin, carefully picking her words; "to take your cousin to the coach."

"Why don't *he* go?" said Tom, frowning frightfully.

"*He* can't, and your father can't."

"I won't," said Tom, drawing himself up to his full height, which wasn't much; "it is too much to ask—I've been and walked for miles, I've written verses, I've done every thing, I can't get over it, if I'm provoked—I tell you mother—I don't know what may happen, I may be tempted p'raps to go away, and never be heard of again—I may—"

"Now don't do that," said his mother, coaxingly; "write some more of that beautiful poetry of yours, that does you good—and don't do nothing rash."

"I am very wretched," said Tom; "every

thing goes against me, even Sophy, she who loves every thing in the world alive or dead, but *me!*—but I will be revenged—I'll not go with her, she shall go alone, and then perhaps, she'll know what it is to feel alone in the wide world.—I wouldn't be her, I wouldn't—to be the misery of a fellow creature as she is of me. I wouldn't be Sophy, any more than I would be myself, if I could help it—I do declare to be beside myself, would be a mercy—that it would."

"Don't say such horrid things."

"Father," said Tom, in answer; "If I think too much, you taught me; if I'm too much of a philosopher, you taught me; if I'm a wretched creature, you taught me that. With all your arguments, you've taught me to *argue with myself*, and that makes me unhappy. I quarrel with myself, and then that makes me quarrel with other people! I've too much delicacy of mind for this world, I feel so much, and all the misery

of my life, I owe to you, and your philosophy!"

"Oh Tom! now don't," said Mrs. Spil-din."

"I wish—I wish I had never been born," said Tom.

At this grand climax, there was a pause, and Tom struck his head with his hand—he had seen them so often do it at the minor theatres, that he believed, that was the best way of expressing his despair.

"The feelings of a Christian," mildly suggested his mother.

"Christians are not in love," said Tom in a wild manner.

"Aint they?" said his father unable to stand that—"aint they—that's all."

"It's easy to say things," said Tom moodily, "when you don't feel nothing."

"I'm sure *I* feel for you, my boy," said his mother, very much cut up at this strange mood of Tom's—if he would but talk a little faster she would feel more comfortable, but this odd way of bringing out little sentences

of which neither she nor anybody else could make anything, frightened her; “she hoped to goodness Tom wasn’t going mad!” if he should be! she had heard of such things, and geniuses were more likely to go mad than other people, of course they were! If Tom should go mad for love of Sophy, and have to go into a madhouse, and have a strait waistcoat, and have his head shaved, and be starved, and be beaten—her son—her own dear Tom---that such a dreadful thing should happen to Tom! Mrs. Spildin’s imaginations were too much for her and she began to cry.

With all his oddnesses Tom was devoted to his mother, and when he saw her in tears his strange mood gave way at once, and he went up and put his arm awkwardly round her, and put his uncouth face down close to hers, and kissed her forehead; he felt that ugly and uninteresting as he was *she* loved him none the less.

“What are you crying for, mother dear,” said Tom bringing down his rough and yet squeaking voice to a tone of real sweetness.

"You my boy—you—I can't bear to see you so—unhappy," sobbed Mrs. Spildin, "you frighten me Tom, you do."

"Well, well, dear mother for your sake I will try to get over this---but it is so fresh, so sudden, so very bitter to me, boy as I am, that---that," and Tom too wiped away tears from his young eyes, the sorrows of our youth are harder far to bear than those of our maturer years.

"I'll---I'll try and get over it I will, I'll argue with—myself about it, like my father, that I will—I'll do my best to please you, mother, and now I'll not wish Sophy there good-bye; I'll just go to my work without seeing her. When she comes back I may perhaps have made up my mind, but I must write---dozens of verses first," said Tom.

"Tom," said his father, "I wonder as a philosopher you hav'nt more strength of mind."

"I never found our philosophy gave any strength of mind, to either of us," said Tom spitefully---"did you?"

"It ought---it must---it should," said Mr. Spildin with energy.

"It don't," said Tom dogmatically.

"Then it's our faults," said Mr. Spildin, "I think that very likely," said Tom looking very mischievous and full of meaning.

"Well Tom that's neither here nor there," said Mr. Spildin, "we have gone far enough away from the beginning of all this. "Will you take Sophy to the coach?"

"No sir," said Tom.

"Is that obedience to your father?" asked the little artist with as much dignity as he could assume.

"No," shortly answered Tom.

"Then sir," said the painter getting angry, "how do you justify yourself?"

"Easy," said Tom sitting quietly down, and playing with his shoe which he reached by crossing one knee over the other.

"Do it sir, justify yourself—if you can," continued the indignant father.

"I'll argue it sir, *in your own way*," said Tom slyly, his natural disposition beginning

to get the better of a despair which, though very real, he had thought it a kind of duty to encourage to the utmost.

"A parent," observed Tom gravely, "is a parent and as such ought to be obeyed."

"Good—very good," said his father, "get out of that sir, if you can."

"Easy," declared Tom for the second time, "if a parent asks you to do what is right, good; but if a parent asks you to do what is wrong---to steal now—or do a murder, is one obliged to obey a parent then?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Spildin.

"Then you're caught!" said Tom triumphantly, "you are—you've asked me to do what I think isn't right."

"Think that it isn't right to take your cousin to the coach! why what the devil do you mean?—why who taught you to think?"

"You did," said Tom, his ugly little eyes twinkling with delight, "you prided yourself upon it sir, you know you did."

"Tis said that Pride shall have a fall, so I deserve it; *oh I do!*" said Mr. Spildin

with remarkable humility, “but how you can call it like asking you to steal or murder—prove me that sir.”

“Easy,” said Tom, for the third time; “it’s murder—to my feelings.”

“Your feelings may be hung,” said the little artist, out of all patience with his son (for being so like him).

“You’re welcome sir, to do it—if you can—I wish they were—I don’t care what becomes of me,” said Tom, with an air of impertinent resignation, which was really too provoking.

“Tom, Tom!” exclaimed his mother; “it’s wicked quite to aggravate your father so.”

“I didn’t mean to do it, mother, I’m aggravated myself beyond all bearing,” said the precocious Tom in a penitential tone; “I can’t study my words, I’m too unhappy, much.”

“Then you will *not* take Sophy to the coach?”

“Certainly not,” said Tom.

"Then you will make me break my—appointment?" asked Mr. Spildin.

"If you *like to do it*," said Tom in the most provokingly cool way.

"And you actually refuse to go."

"Decidedly—nothing shall make me," said Tom.

"And what am I to say to Sophy—what?—am I to tell her you won't go!"

"Tell her that I won't go—*out of revenge!*" said Tom in the most sublime manner, as he left the room, banging the door with violence.

It was evident that Mr. Spildin could not manage *all* his boys.

And it was evident, that though Tom was suffering precisely from the same sorrow and despair as Horace Leigh, he had a different way of showing it!

But the courage, even of the aggravating Tom was on the wane; he could not have carried his bold face, or his impertinence on for five minutes longer; he must have given in, and begged pardon all round and pro-

mised to go, if he had staid a minute longer, and so he left the room before he was conquered. He went into his own little den, and there the first thing he saw, was a bunch of flowers, which had been given him by a nursery gardener, with whom he had an acquaintance ; he had meant to have given them to Sophy, but before he could do so—he had (only yesterday,) heard the news —he would have trodden them under foot, but they were really too beautiful for that—and now he looked at them, and though his first idea was to crush, his next was again, to spare them. So he took them up, and determining to see Sophy once again, before she went away, for an indefinite length of time, to Mrs. Vernon's—he knocked at her door, and she came out upon the landing.

He, really, great awkward boy as he was, was too much touched to speak, so he put the flowers into her hand, and gently clasped her fingers, in his, round the stalks.

“ They were meant for you, Sophy, before

I heard the—news,” said Tom, when she had thanked him.

She tried to turn it off, and taking no notice of the speech, she exclaimed—

“ Good gracious you’re not ready yet—do pray go and get ready—and then get me a coach, you will never be in time to go with me.”

“ Do you really wish me to go ?” said Tom, yielding to the long habit of doing every thing she asked him.

“ Of course I do—you wouldn’t have me go alone amongst all the ostlers and the people, Tom—you will take care of me I know.”

This judicious little appeal was too much for Tom—revenge and all were forgotten in the idea of taking care of Sophy—so asking her to tell his father he was going ! Tom flew to prepare himself—to cord the boxes, to get the hackney coach, to do every thing in short, taking care only, not to meet his father.

When they were fairly off, Tom turned round suddenly, looked in Sophy's very pretty face, and said—

“Have you read the verses?”

She colored up, as she answered.

“No, not yet, I've had no time, but I shall read them in the coach.” she had had so many of his verses, and she so seldom understood them, that she often did *not* read them.

“They are very dreadful,” said Tom ; “and very true—every word was wrung from my heart !”

“Poor fellow, were they indeed ?” said Sophy, thinking that must be horrid, though she didn't know how.

“And if ever James treats you, as you do me, hating you, Sophy, whilst you love him still : if ever this should happen, though I hope it never may, then think of me, for you will feel what I now feel !”

Poor Sophy looked quite aghast, at this horrid and unnatural supposition : but the eloquence of the uncouth Tom, made its

impression on her, and she turned a kind and pitying glance upon his face ; she knew what she would, and must feel in, such a case, and so she pitied him.

What more might have been said on either side can never now be known, for the hackney coach rattled up to the door, or rather as near it as the presence of the stage coach itself would allow, and the cousins were too much engaged in looking after places and boxes, to be sentimental.

Some one ought to write an elegy upon the dead stage coaches ; they were beautiful and cheerful wayfarers, those neat affairs, with their four bright-looking horses, galloping merrily through the old towns with their quaint buildings—stopping so long in pleasant little villages, showing one the country and the people, as one passed ; bringing smiling faces to the doors and windows ; giving one an interest in the journey, from the lodge, at which its master was taken up in state, to the little inn porch, and the guard's flirtations with the barmaid.

Very different, and far less pleasant is it, to go along with smoke and noise, stopping till strangers and foreigners might think our towns were stations, our population all—policemen.

Well, Tom carefully placed Sophy outside the coach, gave her in charge to the coachman with an impressive dignity, which had no effect whatever, till he said, very loud, in order to attract attention from any of the crowd who liked to give it—

“ Coachman, you will set Miss White down at the lodge of High Elms—Mrs. Vernon’s—do you know it ?”

“ Rather !” said the coachman. “ I’ll take care.”

And whilst Sophy was nodding and smiling still at Tom, the coach drove off ; and Tom was left standing there, looking wistfully after it. There was a cheerfulness and bustle in the scene which roused him up ; he tried to feel as miserable and poetic as before, but for the life of him he could not manage it ; he cast his eyes upon the ground,

and thought of Sophy, and of James, and sighed; but it was an effort—his despair would not come back; so he walked off with his hands in his pockets; and do what he would he smiled; and then he laughed outright; he meant to tell his friend that he had come off victorious in the argument with his father: and he did tell him—"He had beaten his father with his own stick, and left him for dead on the field."

## CHAPTER IX.

SOPHY WHITE had a very prosperous journey. From the moment that the coachman knew that she was going to Mrs. Vernon's he was all attention and civility. He more than once hoped she was "all right," and several times offered her brandy-and-water. At last the four bright bays drew up at the lodge ; an under housemaid, with whom she had been acquainted in her former visit, was in waiting to receive her ; the lodge-keeper

came out to welcome her, and an under-groom was in waiting also, to carry her box.

It is generally easy to see by the manners of the servants, the estimation in which you are really held by the masters of a house ; the domestics often hear their real opinion, and consciously or unconsciously act accordingly. Judging by this rule, it was very evident that Sophy White was a great favorite of Mrs. Vernon's.

To Sophy's eager enquiries after the poor old lady, the answers were not satisfactory : she was no worse, but she was also no better ; in fact Mrs. Vernon was suffering under a slow and chronic disorder, which at her age was likely to undermine her strength, without placing her in any very immediate danger.

She did not wish to see her young favorite that night ; with her usual consideration for everyone about her, she did not wish Sophy to be installed in her duties of assistant nurse, till she was thoroughly rested from her long journey ; but the next morn-

ing she was ushered by her aunt, the lady's maid, into the invalid's chamber ; and she was greatly shocked at the change in the old lady ; Mrs. Vernon had in truth never recovered from her severe attack some time before ; she required a good deal of attendance, though she sometimes for an hour or two was carried on her sofa into her morning room on the same floor ; at these times she would see her men of business, and transact her affairs, just as when she was well ; the mind was as clear and as capable of exertion as ever ; but the machine was weary of its work, and wheel by wheel was giving way—the strange machinery of the 'human frame was in her case, worn out.

Sophy's office was to sit with her, to read to her, with her soft voice, her letters, and then to answer them : to read books, suited to the state of one, who knew that slowly but surely she was passing away from this world to another ; to listen with awakening understanding to the comments of the truly pious old lady, to listen to and learn much

of that which had hitherto been a sealed book to her...to be to Mrs. Vernon, in fact, as a daughter, and to love her nearly as well: such were the tasks of the amiable and gentle Sophy.

To Mrs. White, her aunt, and godmother, this assistance was very valuable, for the old lady was well pleased to depend on Sophy in the day, provided that she could have the attendance of her valued old servant at night; for then from want of sleep, and restlessness, she suffered more uneasiness than in the day.

Time so passed on for a few weeks, and then the invalid grew rather worse, though not, the doctor thought, in any danger; but she now required incessant attention; she could bear no one about her but her maid, and her niece, Sophy; and they were becoming quite worn out. At last Mrs. White, the old maiden attendant, who was very far from young, was taken ill herself, from over fatigue and anxiety, and Sophy, with respect to

personal attendance on Mrs. Vernon, was left alone.

Luke Leigh and his wife were staying at Langton Park, and the servants thought it right to summon him. Luke never interested himself deeply in what did not immediately concern himself, and as he was not to be her heir, he was not deeply affected by hearing she was not so well. However, he agreed that he and Emily would come over to High Elms for a day or two.

But Mrs. Vernon could not bear the bright face and merry voice of Emily—she could not bear the gaiety of manner which nothing could subdue entirely; she would not have her in the room—she would not have her on any account sit up with her—Sophy could wait on her—Sophy could sit up. Mrs. Vernon must indeed have been ill to have been so wanting in consideration as not to remember that poor Sophy had been sitting up two or three nights already, or so wanting in her usual observation as not to notice the pale cheeks and heavy eyes of her young

attendant. She must be worse in reality, although she asserted that she was feeling better than she had done for some time ; she took more nourishment—she wished Emily and Luke good-night, in a stronger tone than usual—she listened, with her thin hands clasped together, to the evening prayers and reading—she thanked Sophy for all her kind attention—she hoped that Mrs. White would soon be well enough to help her—she watched Sophy about the room with eyes as bright as ever ; and when the last of her ministerings was over, she said—

“ God bless you, Sophy !” and turned to sleep.

Presently she was at rest, breathing regularly and slowly, but—Sophy fancied too—in rather a strange way.

Sophy White extinguished all light, but one small shaded lamp, and took her book. The hours struck one by one on a small clock, with a silvery sound—a sound in miniature. The night was warm ; there

was an oppression in the air of the dark chamber of illness, spacious as it was ; the night was very still ; the trees were not swaying or swinging their branches to and fro in the wind ; the tall trees which grew close to that corner of the High Elms were not as usual whipping the window with their leaves. There was no breeze to wake strange noises like spirits whispering amongst them—to cause them to shake and shiver, as if in fear of something *we* have no power to see—or to make them seem to dance and sing for joy. There are such wild colloquies at night, between the winds and the trees laden with leaves, that those still watchers who are forced to listen to them, grow pale and superstitious at the mysterious sounds.

Sophy had felt this more than once within the last few nights of her short life; but there was no wind to-night, to howl and shriek and bluster round the old chimneys of High Elms : to rattle doors and casements, as if in jest, to whistle shrilly here, and clatter there, with all the wonderful variety

of noises which the winds of heaven can produce, as if in sport, when their wild progress is opposed by an old house. They revel then ! they seem to find their way into it by chinks and crannies, invisible by day, they rush up long passages, and bang ill-fastened doors, in ways which seem impossible...they seem to meet and play in an old house.

Three o'clock struck—four o'clock struck, in the tiny accents of the clock; and Sophy rose from her book to tend the fire; she prepared some nourishment in case it should be wanted; and she crept slowly to the bedside, and looked at Mrs. Vernon.

She was still fast asleep. Once or twice she had moved and started uneasily, and her young nurse had sprung to her side, with her light and noiseless step...but now, with the exception of a loud breathing, she was still; and Sophy, who had been much alarmed the night before, by seeing the dear old lady pale as death, rejoiced to see that now she was no longer so; her face was

flushed...and Sophy was too young and inexperienced to be alarmed at that, for she believed her to be better than usual. Yet the young watcher had a feeling of nervousness that night she had not had before ; she feared she knew not what; but after looking at her some time she went back to the easy chair and to her book.

She felt more happy too than she had done the night before; for then poor Mrs. Vernon had breathed so low, that every now and then she could not hear her, and she had listened in paroxysms of terror, till she could hear her breathe again; waiting a long, unnatural time, till at last she had heard the breath. The night before poor Sophy had more than once fancied she must be dead : who has not fancied that, who has watched through long nights by one they loved ?—but now, to-night, after she had looked at her, Sophy felt far more comfortable. Mrs. Vernon breathed—she was quite sure of that: she heard her, breath by breath ; there was no listening, no doubt ;

and then she had quite a colour—she must be better—much.

There is a time towards morning, when the eyes of a watcher become weary of watching, and as Sophy sat there in an easy chair, the little clock struck the half hour after four—there was not a sound—the dogs even were silent—nature itself seemed to be slumbering ; the letters of the book became indistinct, before the eyes of the young girl, tired as she was ; and she laid it down—she started up, she feared that she was about to sleep ; she sat up, with a determination not to close her eyes ; but nature would assert its claim, and Sophy slept.

She dreamt of home, and James, and many pleasant things, and then with her dreams mingled Mrs. Vernon's voice, and she fancied she was calling her ; and then she had that strange feeling, that every one has had at times—knew that she was asleep, and wished to wake, and could not—and then the voice was more distinct and suddenly

with a wild start, she woke—woke fully up, and sprang upon her feet.

Mrs. Vernon had been speaking, *that* was no dream.

“And Sophy,” she continued ; “you will be sure not to forget what I have told you.....where I put the will.....I trust to you to tell them...”

And with a slight groan, Mrs. Vernon closed her eyes, which had been open, but had a strange and glassy look.

Sophy exclaimed :

“*Where* did you say you put the will, dear madam—*where* did you say you put the will ; I did not hear, oh tell me where !”

But to her anxious and eager questioning, no answer came.

The poor old lady had made a terrible exertion, to tell Sophy, where she had placed her will, and she had fallen into a slumber—heavy, deep, and dangerous.

Poor Sophy began to understand it all—

she too had fallen asleep, the voice that mingled with her dreams, was but too real—the voice that seemed to be Mrs. Vernon's had indeed been hers ; and she could not wake—she had been called—and still slept on—she had been told where the will was, and still slept on—she had been told a fact, important indeed to Horace Leigh, through him to James, through James to her, and still slept on.

But Mrs. Vernon would wake soon, then she would ask her, it would be time—but Mrs. Vernon *never woke again.*

Poor Sophy did not fear this for a moment ; she sat by the bed-side, sorrowful though she knew not half the real cause she had for sorrow ; frightened though she knew not half the consequences, of her overpowering drowsiness—and she sat quietly and calmly by the bed, until she noticed that every breath, drawn by the sleeper, had a longer and longer interval before another came—she looked again at Mrs. Vernon, and upon her face was a

change so great and strange, to one who had never seen the shadows of death visibly creeping over a dying fellow creature, that she became terribly alarmed—she called her aunt, and when the more experienced woman saw, that not to be mistaken look upon the face of the kind mistress she had loved and served for years ; she was overwhelmed with grief and self reproach, that even ill as she herself still was, she could have left her mistress for a night. She summoned Luke and Emily ; advice was instantly sent for ; the medical attendants gave not the shadow of a hope : until the morning came, sunny, and bright, and cheerful, Mrs. Vernon still appeared alive ; but about nine she peacefully and calmly breathed her last. She never woke, and her last words had been spoken to Sophy whilst the poor, tired girl dreamt she was speaking !

Emily was seized wtth such violent grief at this sudden and unexpected death of the old lady, of whom she was very fond, that Luke feared for her health; declared she

must not, and should not be in the house during the sad scenes that must follow ; it would be too much for her ; so whether she would or no, the carriage was to take her back that day, to Langton Park ; Charlotte having come over the moment she heard the news, to comfort and console her ; Emily felt it was a disrespect to leave the house ; she entreated to be allowed just to remain for a few days ; but Luke was positive, and in her grief, she could not resist his very firm determination, that she should go.

As yet Emily had not learnt to have her way, as yet, the words of Horace were fresh, and she never opposed her husband. Luke looked round with rather envious eyes upon the fair domain, which now belonged to Horace. True that the Leigh had been in their family for centuries, and that was his ; but still High Elms was very beautiful and worth much more ; six or seven thousand a year at least ; well Horace was indeed a lucky fellow, and he must write to tell him how very unexpectedly poor Mrs. Vernon

had been called away, and summon him to take possession. Luke Leigh began to write, but could hardly help shutting his teeth tightly together and saying to himself—

“ All this should have been mine !”

The morning was passing slowly on, the young Leigs had breakfasted, for none of the events or trials of this life interrupt the daily routine of a large house ; it is only in the dwellings of the poor that such events come really home to every one. Emily shut herself up in her own little room till Charlotte came—Sophy had cried herself to sleep—the medical attendants had departed and Luke was left alone ; he wandered about the house in a restless and unsettled manner ; he walked into Mrs. Vernon’s morning room, and sat down there ; then he went here and there, looking at this and that, out of the merest idleness ; but with all his habitual want of quick-sightedness, he could not help observing that wherever he went, Mrs. Vernon’s faithful old servant

came to him with some excuse or question, too trifling, to be the real cause of her seeking him out—he felt she had some motive, but what it could be he had no power of divining:—particularly in the morning room—when he was sitting there, she came in and out so strangely, that he took refuge in the drawing room: feeling, in spite of himself, chilled and uncomfortable, he rang and ordered the fire to be lighted, and then more than ever came in and out, one of the servants; they evidently did not look on him as their new master; and still more than ever came, with her trifling questions, the tearful and anxious Mrs. White.

What Sophy told her of the last words of Mrs. Vernon, weighed upon her mind ; she knew the will was somewhere, for she had seen and witnessed it. All the servants of the family, were prejudiced against Luke Leigh by a thousand little actions of his youth and manhood, and Mrs. White, in her excited state of mind, had taken into

her head, that he was looking for the will, and might destroy it !

She had heard of such things, and never was there much more temptation ; she did not like his wandering about, in that odd way ; she did not like his ordering a fire —for it was summer.

At last the faithful creature, who felt herself a kind of self-constituted guardian of the interests of her dear mistress's heir, till he himself could come — determined upon speaking to Luke—she had no confidence in him—no one had ever confidence in him—but also she feared him not ; he had no power over her ; so she summoned up courage and with tearful eyes but a bold heart, she entered for the hundredth time, the room where Luke was sitting.

“ What are you come again ? ” said he, in a rough voice ; “ I really wish you wouldn't interrupt me in this manner, Mrs. White.”

“ Why sir ? ” said she, fixing her eyes sharply upon him ; “ you are not ac-

customed to these sad occasions—I was present, when your respected grandfather breathed his last—regretted, sir, by everybody—and I was with Mrs. Vernon when your grandmother died ; I thought it my duty, sir, being so experienced, to tell you that it is usual, sir, for *two or three people*, sir, to look for the will ; there may be directions about the funeral, sir,” here the poor woman burst into tears ; “and you must give orders at once.”

“ I think it most impertinent, most insolent ! ” said Luke ; “ your presuming thus to suppose, that I am ignorant of *my* duty upon this most painful occasion—the only excuse, is that you knew me as a child, and still consider me, I do believe, as such—I am now writing to Mr. Browning—you only interrupt and stop me—leave the room.”

“ I only wished, sir.....”

“ Leave the room,” brutally reiterated Luke, and she obeyed—repeating to herself—

“ Thank God, *he* is not master here ; I do

believe he would deprive young Mr. Horace of his rights if he could do it. Nothing is too bad and cruel for him, boy or man," and she sobbed as she went off to superintend many things, all bitterly sorrowful to her.

Luke sent the note off to the old family lawyer, Mr. Browning, and fast as his fat pony could be persuaded to proceed he came upon his way to High Elms—the pony, lazy as it was, knew that road well, and knew the stables and their creature comforts better, so with less slow and unwilling steps than usual, he trotted on.

He just arrived in time to speak to Emily, and to condole with her, before she left the house, for her old home at Langton Park : and the good lawyer with his usually rubicund cheeks as pale as death, and his happy, comfortable looking face, clouded with sincere regret, shook the hand of the fair young wife, with real affection and sympathy ; he felt that they were indeed fellow mourners. Turning from her to Luke's dark sullen face, illumined with no

light of manly intellect, yet shaded by no natural grief, Mr. Browning rejoiced that Mrs. Vernon's heir was such a different man.

The search for the will began, but it had not been found when dinner was announced.

The desk in which the lawyer himself had placed the will, was carefully ransacked — paper by paper anxiously examined without effect ; till Luke declared—

“ We must look for it to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER X.

THE morning after Mrs. Vernon's death, Luke and the lawyer searched, but they could not find the will.

Another day, the one on which Horace was hurrying down to take possession, another search—but still they could not find the will.

The colour mounted into Luke's sallow cheek, the property was all in land, and he was heir-at-law !

Still he said nothing, but the shrewd lawyer, though he was strangely disappointed, said in a calm manner—

“ I think it very likely Mr. Horace knows where the will I made, was placed ; we must patiently await his coming.”

And Luke felt sick at heart, for that was possible, nay probable—but still hopes ran riot in his mind—if after all—“ there should not be a will,” and Luke rushed out into the open air, and walked with head upright and talking to himself—he felt, that he must hide his exultation, he might be disappointed yet—and at the thought the flush faded away—the smile of triumph left his heavy face—and his countenance reassumed its sullen air.

He walked fast and far through the grounds, for he knew it would scarcely be right to go beyond them, yet—he would have given the world for one of the horses standing idle in the stable, to gallop his excitement off—but that would not be right—and then he thought another day and he

might be “acknowledged master there—but no—that was not likely,” and so in fiery alternations of hope and fear—envy and triumph—preying on a mind unused to any emotions, save those of anger—preying on a brain unused to thought of any kind; Luke passed a wretched day, wandering about; whilst Horace Leigh was galloping down, to take possession.

When he returned, the post-chaise was still standing at the door, for Horace had arrived.

He had driven up with feelings of the deepest sorrow; the closed windows and the silent and quiet servants struck him almost with awe—he went into the Chamber of the Dead, and then, and not till then, with a paler cheek than was his wont, he returned to the drawing-room, where Mr. Browning impatiently awaited him; but still no Luke.

“Now, my dear sir,” began the lawyer, “allow me to ask if you are not in possession of the knowledge of the place where Mrs. Vernon deposited her will.”

"Certainly not," said Horace in astonishment, "I know nothing whatever of it."

"Indeed!" he anxiously ejaculated, "is that possible?"

"Has anything extraordinary happened?" enquired Horace, astonished at all this.

"We cannot find the will," replied the lawyer.

Horace started; with all his presence of mind he was not prepared for this.

"Has there been a search?" asked he after a moment's pause.

"Only too careful a one," replied the lawyer, "but it must be renewed to-morrow in your presence."

"And Luke is heir-at-law," said Horace speaking aloud in his extreme surprise.

"Only too true," replied the sorrowing lawyer.

Such was the posture of affairs when the three sat down to dinner.

"There are means I left till your arrival," said the lawyer to Horace Leigh. "I have not as yet examined all the servants, we

*may* learn something, and we *may* have overlooked—" but he could not speak out the words with confidence, they seemed to waver on his lips.

There had been a moment's hesitation as to who should take the head of the dinner-table—*who was the master there?* who could answer that question? so Horace waved to Luke as his elder brother—he was not master if there was no will: and so Luke with a deep and crimson glow over his sallow face, sat at the head; two days ago, he could not have dreamt of having the right to do so, now it might be his, the chances now were in his favor. The meditations of Horace Leigh were that night not without anxiety, and not without excitement; he was overwhelmed with wonder, that after all his aunt Vernon's promises, she could so have deceived him; it was not in that upright character of hers to do so---he wronged her by the mere supposition; there *must* be a will---he knew there *had been* one. Had he offended her by the want of confidence, that

had been so fatal to his own happiness ?---this was a new idea, quite a new light---had she destroyed the will in anger ? she had said she was hurt and angry ; but no, such meanness was not in her ; he could not harbour such a thought of his kind friend, no, there must be a will---the servants had not as yet been spoken to on the subject, they might know of some clue.

But if there were no will, or rather if it had been destroyed by Mrs. Vernon, intending perhaps to make another, and cut off by death before she had had time to execute her full intentions---he was a beggar, nothing more or less ; he had nothing now or ~~in~~ future, and working man as he had been he had won a reputation and a name amongst his fellow barristers, but he did not make enough to furnish himself with even a bare subsistence.

The prospect was black indeed ; but he would not look upon that side of it, for there *must* be a will ; they had not the same interest in the search that he would have ;

*he* might find it ; still the reverse of this flattering picture would occur to him again and then again ; and after thought and time had taken their course awhile, he mentally drew himself up in a firm attitude to meet the worst ; but it was a night of painful thoughts to him, though his feelings were as nothing compared to the fiery thoughts of envy, hope, and terrible, because intensely selfish, anxiety, which kept Luke Leigh awake.

The morning came : and both the young men were early astir. The day would, in all probability, be of such an eventful character to one or indeed both of them, that they were naturally anxious to know the result.

The search in the presence of the heir expectant began at an early hour—watched by the heir at law.

The old family lawyer, whose sympathies were all for Horace, worked with a heavy heart.

Horace observed—

“ Perhaps there may be somewhere a

secret drawer, in which my aunt placed her more important papers."

"There is an escrutoire and a cabinet in her own room: but we have looked in both."

They went into Mrs. Vernon's morning room. Horace exerted his own skill, but yet—no will was found.

The lawyer was greatly staggered; and involuntarily he appealed to *Luke as master* when he asked permission to examine the old servants.

Mrs. White came in, when sent for; and Mr. Browning began to question her.

"You remember, Mrs. White, during Mrs. Vernon's former illness you were called upon to sign a paper; are you aware of what that paper was?"

"My poor dear mistress told me it was her will," said the old servant, striving to restrain her tears.

"Did you see where it was placed?" enquired the lawyer.

"In her large business desk—you put it there yourself, sir."

"True," replied Mr. Browning; "but it is not there now."

Mrs. White gave a start; and then such a *searching look at Luke* that both his brother and the lawyer saw it, and were struck with it.

"Not there, sir!—it *was*."

"Have you any idea where Mrs. Vernon may have placed it? had she any other place of security?"

"I do not know—or *think*," said Mrs. White, with marked emphasis, and again eyeing Luke in a strange way, "or think *she* moved it," answered Mrs. White.

Again she startled two of her listeners; but Luke, the person at whom her words were aimed, saw not her looks, he was sitting there, with his eyes fixed on the ground; but when they looked at him, although he evidently was not aware of the fact; a crimson flush suddenly passed over his face and forehead, and settled there.

"She had no other place for papers and for business, except indeed the cabinet," said

Mrs White, brightening up as she eyed the old Indian cabinet with its many drawers.

"We have looked there; we hoped you might know of some other chance," said Mr. Browning, shaking his head in a desponding manner.

The faithful old servant thought a moment, and then joyfully exclaiming... "I think I do," she left the room.

Again a change—once more a hope; but Luke sat without stirring, with that unusual flush; he did not seem moved by this new chance. And aroused by Mrs. White's strange manner, the shade of a suspicion crossed the lawyer's mind, but he crushed it as he would have crushed a venomous creature; the thought was too unworthy, both of himself and Luke.

There was a pause, very exciting to the silent party in the old morning room; and then Mrs. White appeared, trembling with eagerness, bearing a small casket or jewel box, and a small bunch of keys.

She stood there respectfully, but waited

with strained eyes and beating heart. That casket had not been out of her own immediate charge ; it might be there, and safe.

The lawyer opened the box ; his hand, hardened as he was to such things, trembled with emotion.

It was a jewel-box, and diamonds and rubies lay sparkling there of value indeed, but of no interest now. But to the little box there was a drawer, the lawyer opened it, and there lay a paper, Horace involuntarily started forward ; but Luke sat quite still, he seemed paralyzed.

“ He knows it is not there,” was Mrs. White’s mental ejaculation, “ he knows better,” thought she, wringing her hands together; for everything Luke did, or left undone, confirmed her in her fixed idea.

The paper was of the *same paper* as the will, and Mr. Browning’s face lighted up ; he gave a glance of triumph at Horace and opened it.

It was a list of the jewels, that the box contained, in Mrs. Vernon’s hand.

Mrs. White could hold out no longer.

"There *was* a will...I know there was one...her own last words said that there was a will...Call Sophy in, Mr. Browning, she will tell Mr. Horace what she heard. I know there *was* a will."

"Be calm, Mrs. White," said the lawyer, in an agitated voice, "go for your niece."

And Sophy came.

"You sat up with Mrs. Vernon the last night of her existence," said the lawyer, "and you heard her last words...What were they?"

"I did not hear them all," said Sophy, in a choked voice, "I was asleep...worn out...I dreamt she called me; but I could not wake, and when I did it was too late...She told me where she put the will...and I did not hear her..." and Sophy was so overcome that she was desired to sit down.

"If you were asleep...and did not hear her...how do you know what she said...how do you know she told you where she put the will?" interrupted Horace, with some

severity, the instinct of the lawyer overcoming his individual feelings. "Take time, recollect yourself, be more clear and collected."

Sophy saw she was making them doubt her, and by a great effort she calmed herself, and said in a clear but very low tone:

"I know it, sir, *by what I heard*...I woke and started to my feet, and her last words were :

"' And, Sophy,...you will be sure not to forget what I have told you...where I put the will...I trust to you to tell them.'

" I asked, entreated her to tell me where; but she never spoke again...She told me... *whilst I slept...*" and the poor girl's tears flowed fast at the remembrance.

" So when she died...*there was a will*," said Mrs. White in a low but distinct whisper.

At this Luke started up...out of his reverie...upright as if he had been shot.

" When people are dying...they are delirious often...my aunt was wandering...that

careful nurse ! was dreaming...There could have been no will...where is it ?"

" It is easier for *us* to ask that question than to answer it," said the old servant, laying an emphasis upon the word ; she did not venture more.

But Mr. Browning started slightly.

" My aunt must have changed her mind," said Luke, all his exultation breaking bounds, " she must have felt she had done me injustice...she must have destroyed her will."

" It must have been destroyed...*burnt* ; who knows ?" said Mrs. White, in an unnatural voice.

But those words woke the idea in the clear mind of Horace, that she might have done so in anger, or otherwise.

" Do you remember, Mrs. White, any time at which my aunt occupied herself in burning or tearing up her papers ?"

Mrs. White hesitated for a moment.

" Yes, sir, I do...about a month before her unexpected death she spent a morning here, sir, and saw several people and attended

to business...much as usual...and when the people were all gone she sat down at that very escrutoire, and..." she was sorry to admit it..." and she did burn some papers; but I believe they were old letters."

"Was the desk there?" enquired the lawyer.

"That I don't know," answered Mrs. White, "I don't remember."

"Do you recollect?" said Luke suddenly to Sophy.

"Yes, sir, I remember her asking me to bring her the desk."

"Did she say anything?" asked the lawyer.

"She desired me to leave the room."

Mr. Browning fairly groaned.

"I hope you are satisfied," said Luke, exultingly, "fully and perfectly satisfied. I hav'n't a doubt she burnt the will."

"Hav'n't you, sir, oh hav'n't you?" said Mrs. White, involuntarily.

"None in the world," said Luke, "no rational person could have," he drew himself

up exultingly, he gave a glance of malignant triumph at Horace, and unable to keep himself any longer in that state of unnatural tension and quietude, he asked...

“What are the consequences of our having proved there is no will;” he knew only too well, but wished to hear the words—

“You are the heir.”

“I am sorry for your disappointment, Horace,” said Luke, in a voice which was actually taunting; “it must be so severe.” and with these words—he left the room.

Horace and the lawyer were left alone—the natural strength of the young man’s character was roused; he met the trial with a calm and manly fortitude; when he lost Isabelle, he despaired—but now he felt equal to the occasion, sudden and strange, unexpected and bewildering, as was the change.

He looked at Mr. Browning and exclaimed...

“Then I am a beggar!”

“Not so,” said the lawyer; “I have had

the management of Mrs. Vernon's property for years ; she had twenty thousand pounds in the funds...half of that is your right, nothing can deprive you of it."

Horace felt that he had so, at least enough to live on...but in his unselfish mind arose, the first thought that presented itself, was this...

" So all is for the best...I could not after all, have asked Isabelle Walgrave to share my pittance."

The lawyer wrung his hand in silence, his disappointment almost equalled that of Horace himself.

Horace sat there in the arm chair, to try and realise the terrible change in his position, to try really to believe that after all Mrs. Vernon had destroyed her will.

The old lawyer with slow steps and mournful countenance, was taking his way to his own room...shocked, grieved and unhappy...when his way was barred by Mrs. White, who had been watching for him.

" You would do me a great favor, sir, if

you would step with me into the house-keeper's room, for a few minutes...no one will interrupt us, and I have that to say, which I dare not tell to Mr. Horace, he would not believe me; but yet for you to know it, may be an advantage to him."

"I am ready to hear what you may have to relate," said Mr. Browning, with another gleam of hope springing up in his mind ; he could not bear even yet to think that all was lost.

She led the way to the little room and offered him a chair, whilst she stood quietly near the table.

"You must have observed, sir, that I had suspicions—I saw you did observe it...I wish to tell you, sir, on what those suspicions were founded. My dear departed mistress left a will, left everything to Mr. Horace...if I were to be murdered, sir, for saying it, I would say it still. She was not delirious, her illness was not of that nature ; if I had but sat up with her myself...all would have been well and right, but I was ill and my

sitting up worried her. She surely did not destroy the will you made, she loved young Mr. Horace and she knew him far too well, to change her mind. Well, sir, now comes the sad and terrible part of it, which I have to tell. You know my mistress died in the morning. Mr. Luke, sir, walked about looking at this and that, looking, sir, *into* this and that...what should he act so strangely for, if he was not looking for the will. Of any other person, sir, I could not have thought so meanly, but there is no good in Mr. Luke and never was, sir, man or boy. I followed him about, I cared nothing for his rages, I was used to them, and once, sir, I caught him at the desk ...what first led me to watch him, was his asking for the keys—when every one knew—that is they thought they knew, no one had any right to them but Mr. Horace—however I gave them up, fool that I was. I caught him at the desk and he looked confused and shut it up, and seemed much vexed. Well sir, I followed him and saw

him hunting everywhere, and then he ordered a fire in the drawing-room, this summer weather, and I went and sent others in, and they and I saw him burn papers; what could he do that for? how dare he do that, sir. I kept the ashes for you to see, but they are well burnt, not a scrap remains, and then remember sir, how anxious he was to prove my mistress didn't know what she said! how little *he* seemed to fear our finding the will in the old jewel box. Oh sir," said Mrs. White sobbing bitterly,—“he burnt it I am sure, my niece has ruined Mr. Horace—if she or I had heard those poor last words this couldn't have happened, my heart will break to think that I—or mine should have hurt Mr. Horace; can nothing, sir, be done.”

“There is no proof, alas! no will,” said Mr. Browning, “Luke Leigh is master here.”

## CHAPTER XI.

LUKE LEIGH *was* master there! Such was the strange and unexpected aspect of affairs—such was the bewildering change in the position of the brothers.

Luke could resist no longer; he did not wish that any other than himself should be the one to tell the news to Emily; he thought that she would be so pleased—he fancied she would love him better; so, regardless of appearances, he hastened off to Langton Park.

Emily was alone in the drawing-room ; he flew up to her with an expression of joy and delight, which she had scarcely ever seen upon his face since they were married, and exclaimed—

“ You must congratulate me, my love—I must congratulate you.”

“ What *can* have happened ?” said Emily, greatly startled and surprised.

“ *There is no will,*” said Luke, in accents very like rapture; “ and High Elms, and ALL, ALL aunt Vernon’s property is ours !”

“ Impossible !—and Horace ?” asked the wife, in a tone full of tenderness and feeling for her kind brother.

“ Horace has nothing !” said Luke, with a shrug ; “ but fancy, Emily, just fancy ! at least six thousand more, a year. Why we can cut the Leigh and live here, in this famous sporting country : by Jove ! I’ll have such horses ! The old woman tried to cut me off, and couldn’t—what a humbug she must have been !—what a confounded humbug, after all her foolish promises of leav-

ing all to Horace—making no will at all—frightening one so for nothing.”

“ Luke dear, do not speak so of that dear, kind old lady !”

“ She wished to cut me off...it wasn’t her fault she didn’t, that I believe,” said Luke Leigh, sulkily; “ but it’s all right, my little wife, I have it all !”

“ And Horace ?” asked Emily in such a pitying tone that Luke looked at her in astonishment,

“ You are the most provoking little creature in the world,” said Luke, “ I tell you of the most wonderful and unexpected piece of good luck and your only answer is; and Horace ?” and he imitated her! “ one tune! just like the tolling of a bell...I tell you we are rich ! famously rich ! Never mind Horace, he can work for himself, I can’t.”

“ I’m very glad, dear Luke, you are so happy ; if we had gained this great addition to our means in any other way !...but as it is, I can’t help feeling.....”

“ Confound your feelings !” answered

Luke; "I wish you had some for me instead of wasting it on Horace ; it is just fate and luck...and he must take it as it comes...and thank his dear aunt Vernon ! I dare say he won't care quite so much about her and her memory, now that she has disappointed him !"

"Luke," said his wife indignant at the bare idea ; "oh Luke!"

"You say nothing but the same words over again, Emily ; this wonderful good luck has turned your head."

"I think it has turned yours," said Emily significantly.

"And now, my little wife, you are quite a great lady...but I must wish you goodbye and gallop back to our new place ! I have a thousand things to do, a thousand orders to them all, to give ! for I am master now. *Master* in spite of *her* and *him*."

Emily gave him an imploring look...she could not bear to hear him talk in this way ; but the news had upset her, in her delicate state of health, and she did not care to say

much...so he continued without any interruption from her.

"I say Emily it's rather a good joke, but I shall have to ask Horace to stay with me, eh ! invite him...who would have thought it this day week!"

He paused a moment.

"I shall have so much business...and I can't ask Horace to help me, can I poor fellow ?" and he laughed, actually laughed out, to the great disgust of Emily.

"That would be rather too much of a good thing wouldn't it Emily ! but how I'm to get through it all without him I don't know !---but I must try ; the old woman left her affairs in splendid order, that Browning told me---so that will save me some perplexity. How the old lady came not to make a will I never shall understand but it's lucky indeed, for us she didn't !"

Still Emily spoke not, she was in truth more occupied in reading the pages of her husband's character which every sentence

opened to her view, than in thinking of their newly acquired wealth.

"So now good-bye my pretty one, you look dreadfully pale, but I must go; tell Charlotte and your father; they are both out I find, and I can't wait."

"Good-bye---when will you come again?" said Emily, "I have so many questions to ask, but not just now."

"To-morrow if I can," and he left her, to gallop back to High Elms in the highest spirits; it was not merely and simply the accession of fortune that delighted him so much, it was the having, as he would have expressed it, "cut his brother out," that filled him with such huge delight---he had been so much more envious and jealous of his supposed good fortune than any one could have imagined, that this unexpected victory was sweet with all the luxury to him, of gratified revenge.

Luke was an amiable creature!

He entered the house of Death with such a radiant countenance so strangely contrasted

with his usually sullen and lowering look that the servants were beyond measure scandalized.

He walked about speaking in a loud voice, banging the doors in an authoritative manner totally at variance with the respect due to the cold remains of even an indifferent person—there is something so holy and so awful to human nature in a corpse that all the inmates of the house where it is lying in its last repose, speak low and move about with noiseless steps—let the dead be ever so little cared for; but in Mrs. Vernon's house, not a sound had yet been heard, not a smile seen upon the lowest dependant of her household, or the one most remote from her presence when in health, and now—her nephew and her heir, was outraging not only every feeling of affection and respect, but all the common usages and decencies of life under the peculiar circumstances, by his rude and rough selfishness.

To all the servants this disrespect of his gave feelings of rage and disgust, they are

keen judges of us, these domestic lookers on; but the old set in the housekeeper's room agreed.

"It was just like him. What better could they expect of *him*."

To Horace these harsh sounds, these banging doors and loudly pealing bells, and louder voice by which the vulgar mind of Luke Leigh proclaimed himself the master; —to him, alone in the library, endeavouring as he was to school and marshal his feelings —to make his mind equal to the occasion, these sounds of callous want of delicacy or common decency to the dead, were very painful, they jarred on every nerve—and yet he knew he must meet Luke at dinner, bear his exulting smiles, bear his cool and even insolent assumption, endure his pity!—this was the worst of all.

Yet he *must* meet him at dinner, the every day routine of life goes on, let our private feelings or affairs be, what they may, change, as they may.

Horace would have given much, to be

able to leave High Elms at once; but this consolation was denied him; he must wait at least three or four days more; he must pay all due respect to his lost friend. Luke evidently felt and would pay, none—he must see her laid in her last resting place, before he left High Elms---he came to it as to a home, he left it a beggar; yes, after the expectations Mrs. Vernon had raised, after depriving him of any share in his father's property, after being the cause indirectly indeed, but still the cause of his signing away his birthright, he should leave that house a beggar: for such he was; a bare subsistence was actually beggary to him.

Dinner is ready, announced the servant, when the hour had arrived.

Horace went into the dining-room. Luke was not there, he kept him waiting! but at last came in, and as he took his place, motioning with a politeness which was deeply ironical, to his brother to take the bottom of the table, they sat down.

Horace was if anything more calm than

usual. His fine, expressive face bore no trace of mean or violent passions, he was grave indeed and nothing more.

But Luke, with that strange deep red flush upon his countenance, which these stirring events had taught to rest on his low forehead and heavily moulded face, Luke had a malignant gleam in those small snake-like eyes of his which was hard to bear.

His polite attentions bore the very spirit of malicious triumph.

“ A glass of wine Horace ? there is some fine old sherry in the cellar, and some finer claret; you shall try it after dinner !”

“ I hope you like this mutton, *I* mean to kill my own !”

Small insults these which any man living but Luke Leigh must have been incapable of offering.

Men with all their faults are generally above such meanness, Luke was not.

Horace had made a desperate resolve that nothing should force him to quarrel with his brother, and when he determined thus he

knew the probability that his temper would be sorely tried.

It was not however until the promised claret was placed upon the table, and the servants had withdrawn, that the ordeal for the disappointed heir really began.

Luke threw himself back in an easy chair ...threw his legs upon another, and in an attitude which expressed the most insolent and unbounded triumph began :

“I’m sure, my dear fellow, I hope you will stay with me, make this house your home as long as you choose—Emily and I shall always be glad to see you—it will take some time to get it out of ours head, that this is yours—but we *shall* do so I suppose.”

“Thank you,” said Horace, coldly; “I shall accept your invitation, until the funeral is over.”

“And after that I hope,” said Luke, with an urbanity and politeness which was totally unnatural to him.

" After that I must go to town, and work..." said Horace.

" Lucky for you, you are so clever ; if it had been me—I must have starved—how do you like the claret ? I hope you won't go either," continued Luke, finding no answer came ; " I want to consult you on so many things ; but I forget !—I beg your pardon—you might not like it..."

" You will find Mr. Browning a far better adviser than I could be," said Horace, greatly provoked.

" But after a time," said Luke, getting excited and really not meaning now, to insult his brother, overlooking everything in his old headstrong selfishness ; " when you have got over it old fellow ! you will help us with your taste—you really know all about every thing, and though Browning will do for farming, and money, and all that—I shall want you for taste ! to say the truth with this large fortune in addition, I shall be puzzled

—for the only thing I understand is horses.”

Horace, with his clear sightedness, saw that Luke meant no harm by this, so the great *soreness at his heart*—(who has not felt that, if any one has been torturing their feelings intentionally) passed away, and with his generous and forgiving temper, he answered...

“Perhaps Luke I may help you in time—though it is Emily, who should guide you in these matters.”

“She is as pretty and as ignorant, as a child,” said Luke.

And Horace wondered at the justice of the opinion he had expressed.

“I wish to alter!” said Luke, regardless of the pangs he was, or might have been inflicting—“I have so many plans—for making ourselves comfortable!”

Horace thought of *his* plans, all come to nothing now—yet they had been for doing good to others!

"I find the old woman left lots of ready money—I wonder if we are to divide *that*, Horace, I didn't ask—"

Horace could have decided that point, but did not.

"Lucky for me, but devilish unlucky for *you*, that all the old woman leaves is land!"

"I won't deny, that our finding no will is a *mystery* to me," said Horace, looking with fixed attention at Luke.

Luke did not answer; but he bent his head over the claret jug, and pouring out a bumper swallowed it at once.

"The old lady was a humbug," coarsely observed her heir-at-law, "I always thought she was...she liked you—wanted your attentions, and to gain them humbugged you—"

"That I can never believe," said Horace, "she must have meant, to keep her word."

"Not she!" said Luke, he did not believe in that integrity which is incapable of

practising deceit...and Horace did...both the young men judged others by themselves.

"There we must differ," observed Horace, warmly.

"Events have proved my view is right," said Luke, triumphantly.

"I am not sure of that," said Horace, "even yet."

"What do you mean?" said Luke, in a strange tone of voice, "you don't think that the will can now be found."

"Who knows?" said Horace, looking him keenly in the face.

"I'll bet you twenty to one, that you don't find it—you're out of luck!" said Luke, confidently.

"I'll take your bet," said Horace.

"Done—I am certain of winning it," said Luke.

"Are you?" answered Horace, and a shade of Mrs. White's suspicion crossed his mind whether he would or no.

It was early as yet for Luke to be so cer-

tain nothing *could* occur to change the aspect of affairs.

Whatever the thoughts of the two young men might be, they occupied them so entirely, that for a time there was not a sound, except the occasional click of Luke's often replenished glass, as he set it down on the table in a sharp and careless manner.

"Very unfortunate for you the old lady didn't die sooner...before my father," observed the affectionate nephew, "if he had had any idea that you would be served in this way he would have left you something ...I dare say!"

"No one could be prepared for this," said Horace, very quietly ; but the hot blood flew over his whole face at this speech...he longed, vehemently longed to be in a rage; but would not.

"I wonder what you will do ?" said Luke, in a thoughtful manner.

"*Work,*" said Horace, fiercely ; for this was too bad.

"Ah, true," said Luke, "and you have

that ten thousand pounds...your right you know—half of the twenty thousand in the funds—Ah, I suppose that will be enough."

"I will make it so ;" said Horace, with a proud dignity, "it *shall* be enough till I can, by the labour of my hands, earn more."

"Really now," observed Luke, after another pause, "I think you show great fortitude and strength of mind. I don't think any one ever had a greater disappointment, and yet you bear it famously—sitting there so cool and quiet when you decidedly expected and ought to have been *here*."

"Don't go too far, Luke ; you have said nearly enough upon that subject; I do not want to be reminded quite so often."

"I beg your pardon, old fellow," said Luke, "but really it is so strange, all this, and I have no one to speak to—except Emily, and she is a bad listener, for all I could get her to say was—like a parrot, over and over again, "*and Horace?*"

"Did she think of me, Luke," said he,

with his fine face lighting up with a glow of gratified affection.

“ Oh, yes,” said Luke, the quantity of claret he had taken making him rather more inclined to talk than was usually the case with one of such a saturnine nature.

“ Dear Emily !” ejaculated her brother-in-law.

“ She pitied you, I’m sure,” said Luke—“ and so do I ; you are a good fellow—always were ; and really with such a dreadful reverse of fortune—no wonder she pities you—I pity you.”

At these obnoxious words Horace could scarcely keep down the just and natural indignation which had been gradually waxing stronger and stronger, in spite of his fixed determination; he looked proudly and piercingly at his brother, and answered—

“ I can bear *her* pity, and am grateful for it, but I will not have *yours*—I am not sunk so low as that.”

“ I don’t see what you mean; I don’t see what difference there can be between her

pity and mine," said Luke, " except indeed that hers can be no sort of use to you ; and *I* pity you so much, and really and in earnest am so sorry for you, that if at any time, my dear fellow...with your income...how lucky you are not married ! that would be a scrape ! if at any time now, really, if fifty or I'll say a hundred pounds can be of any use, you can command me."

Horace rose and left the room ; he could bear no more.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE funeral of the excellent and much lamented Mrs. Vernon was over, and Horace was about to leave High Elms for Town ; Emily had been so upset by the sudden way in which Luke had communicated his strange intelligence, that she had kept her own room for a few days ; but before her brother-in-law went she asked to see him ; she felt as if she had done him a wrong, and was anxious to atone for it as she best might, but she was helpless in the matter ; and

when they met she could only wring his hand and weep, and beg his pardon !

“ My dearest brother,” she sobbed out, “ I wish that any one in the world but Luke and I were your aunt Vernon’s heirs, as you are not. It is most horridly ill-gotten wealth !”

“ Believe me, Emily,” said Horace, with a noble frankness, “ that though I cannot but regret the power which money gives of doing good, since it was not to be for me, I am truly glad it can be yours ; I have no sister, Emily, so you are really one to me ; and so, remember, if ever you should want advice, if ever you should want a helping hand, you have but to ask it of me ; this *can* make no difference between you and me.”

“ And Luke ?” asked Emily, with some anxiety.

“ We shall be just the same as ever, when his great triumph shall have passed off in some degree : he tried me hard last night, but I would not, and did not quarrel with him—for your sake ; do you, my little sis-

ter, avoid all differences with Luke for mine."

And with these words he pressed both her small hands in his, gazed on her as one looks on a child, stroked the silken hair which shone so brightly on her forehead, and left the room.

The affairs of the good old lady were in such admirable order that in all the accounts Luke had to look over, there was but one irregularity—but that was quite unaccountable.

The large sum of one hundred and forty pounds was altogether missing.

The hot temper of Luke took fire at this, and he declared,

"He would investigate the matter! sift it to the bottom, and bring the thief to justice, be he whom he might; he would suspect—*everybody*, he would find out the truth!"

"But, my dear sir," suggested Mr. Browning. "Mrs. Vernon *may* have expended the sum, and ill as she was, she may

have forgotten to put it down in her account books."

"Perhaps," said Luke, but he did not like this very harmless solution of the mystery; *he liked a storm* and he would have one now!

The steward proved that he had paid the money to Mrs. Vernon, on the very day on which, for the last time, in her own morning room, she had transacted business—"the hundred and forty pounds of the arrears of rent," for which he showed the receipt in her own handwriting.

Sophy and Mrs. White assured Luke and his lawyer, that from that day, being so ill, she had spent and paid away no money whatsoever, and yet there was no trace of that large sum!

The old servants of the house saw that though nothing could be *proved*, Luke Leigh suspected them! and any one who wishes to know their feelings, faithful and attached retainers as they were, has but to imagine his own under such circumstances.

"By Jove," said Luke to Mr. Browning, "I suspect them all! confounded hypocrites! why they pretend to feel much more for the old lady who is gone, than I do—I can't pretend!"

He quite forgot himself, but working and lashing himself into a rage, he said in continuation,

"Well sir, I give you another day to find out what you can, and then if nothing new turns up, I shall take the matter into my own hands—I shall let them see what it is to trifle with me."

The next day passed without any event whatever with the exception of a little scene between Luke and the trustworthy Mrs. White.

"This is a most extraordinary, most suspicious circumstance!" said he, to her upon their meeting accidentally, "your niece and you were the only people much about my poor aunt; you had her keys, and I must say *I* should not like to be exposed to such suspicions!"

"I must remind you," said the old lady's maid in a violent state of virtuous indignation, "that no sooner was the breath out of her poor body, "than *you*, sir, had the keys! and I don't know what's come to this house, I do believe it's haunted, for this is not the only extraordinary and suspicious thing that has occurred!"

Before Luke Leigh could answer, she was gone...she left him standing there.

The next day to that there was still no fresh discovery, and Luke annoyed and perplexed, especially with Mrs. White, swore to himself,

"That he would get rid of the whole set."

When breakfast was over he gave orders to the butler.

"Send all the servants in, from you and Mrs. White, down to the lowest groom, let them one and all assemble here; Sophy White too...and all at once."

Greatly surprised at this strange order, but hoping they were about to receive some gratuity instead of the good legacies they

had made certain of receiving, had there been a will, hoping exactly in the degree in which they knew little and less of Luke ; the servants marshalled into rows, according to their rank, to hear what he might have to say, and take what he might give !

He waited, standing upright by the fire-place till they were perfectly arranged ; he paused a moment, thought of the lost money and began his harangue.

“ I suppose you are by this time all of you aware, that I have lost the sum of more than a hundred pounds ; of course you are all innocent...of course you cared too much for your late mistress to rob her, and of course you care too much for me to rob me ...you thought in the confusion it would escape me, but it has not...no murmurs if you please, someone has robbed me, no one can deny that, and I suspect not one but all ...those most who had most means of access, but one and all...and this day week you go ; others will be found to supply your places, and Mr. Browning will pay you all just de-

mands...not a word," said he, stalking to a door opposite the one by which the astonished band of servants had entered, "I am and will be master here."

This was his way of showing it !

No words can describe the feelings of the old servants of the house at this insulting and injurious conduct: Luke had surpassed their expectations! Not only were they turned upon the world in this sudden manner, but with a blot upon their characters.—fortunately for those who meant to seek other situations Luke also had a character!—And this violent act of authority did little harm.

The fermentation in the house-keeper's room was very great—its inmates had grown into their places, they could not bear the thoughts of change.

" So sudden too!" said the old house-keeper, quite overcome at the idea of giving up her keys of office.

" No one will ever understand the cellar," said the fat butler, " he'll find that out."

"If my poor mistress could be looking down," said the worthy house-keeper, "how this would worrit her!—It is enough to *make her walk!*" she whispered this mysterious hint that the disquieted spirit of her mistress *might* come amongst them; in such an awe-struck voice, with such an evident belief that it was possible, that those to whom she spoke were more than half frightened; and more than one glanced with a nervous look behind them, as if they thought they should "see something."

There is so much that is vaguely horrible in the idea that one lately dead may "walk" as the people always term the appearing of a ghost.

"It wouldn't be the first time," continued the speaker, who was one of a school gone by—"that people have come and walked when others have been accused unjustly, who knows! She may return some day and say where the money is!"

"To tell us where the will was put would be a good act---worthy of a ghost!" said

Mrs. White overcome with her recent illness and by all the events that came so quickly one upon another. She was more sensitive by nature, more attached by old ties to Mrs. Vernon and the home which she had shared with her so long, and so the tears began to fall one by one.

The heart of the fat butler was deeply moved---it made him cunning---so he reminded the old house-keeper she had forgotten something---sent Sophy after her with a long message---and then with his little eyes twinkling with a mixture of fear and hope ---which might have been felt by a more interesting person---he said in a low voice:

“ Dear Mrs. White---*dear* Mrs. White!” he took a chair and sat down close to her, “ don’t fret---now don’t. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do to comfort you---we’ve both had a great loss; but I have borne that---but what I can’t bear, Mrs. White, and won’t bear if I can help it, is to *lose you*---”

“ But you must, Mr. Stock,” said the unconscious spinster; it was so long since

any one had made love to her that she had forgotten all about it, and had given up suspecting people ! though she was a comely woman still, and not unlike her sister, Mrs. Spildin.

“ I needn’t unless you choose,” said Mr. Stock; “ why shouldn’t we live together, and then we needn’t part !”

“ Law, Mr. Stock, old as we are, that wouldn’t do !” said Mrs. White, rather indignantly.

“ Why shouldn’t we *be married*,” whispered the fat butler, coming to the point at once, in the most praiseworthy manner, that there might be no misunderstanding him.

“ Law, Mr. Stock...I never thought of that !” said Mrs. White, opening her eyes very wide, with astonishment. And she never *had* thought of it !

“ Well if you never did...*do now* !” said the fat man, with an affectionate glance; “ we could be comfortable, don’t you think ?

—better than living all alone for both of us...better than trying for another situation ; we are too...*I* am too old...ahem...for that."

The suitor was quite shocked to find he had made an ungallant allusion to her age.

But Mrs. White minded it not at all, she knew she was old and was very sorry for it ; but she was in no way ashamed of it... sensible woman as she was.

" Well, Mr. Stock," said she ; " you *have* astonished me, I didn't really think that any one would ever ask me to marry them, I didn't ! "

" Why not ?" said the fat butler ; " it's lucky for me people have been so stupid as not to do it, there's the more chance for me ; and we've been such good friends—know one another's ways so well—come now ; say yes !"

" Law, Mr. Stock !" repeated she, for the third time ; " I can't make up my mind

all in a minute.....where do you mean to live, and *how* do you mean to live?" enquired the prudent spinster.

The butler saw there *was* a chance for him and answered with alacrity.

"I havn't been here so many years without saving up something—no more I dare say haven't you—two by itself isn't much, but two and two are four—so if my savings, and your savings are not much, they must be more together than if they were apart."

There was no answering this!

"Well, well," said Mrs. White; "I'll think it over; but why—you never said one word of this kind all these year; and then so suddenly?"

"Love," said the fat man, looking inexpressibly tender, "comes when you're not a looking out for it!"

And with this important truth they parted.

Before the week was over they had, in

many tender interviews, settled their future plans—and left the house.

Luke Leigh remained a little longer at High Elms—he arranged the few new servants who arrived into their proper places—and then returned with Emily to the Leigh; he meant to wind up all his affairs there, before he took up his residence, as he intended, at his new home—and as poor broken-hearted Mrs. Leigh could not be induced to leave her own house, Emily wished much to be there for the present.

For once Luke actually gave up his own wishes to her.

The widow scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry, her feelings were so much divided—at one moment she was so very glad Luke was so rich, the next dreadfully sorry Horace had next to nothing.

“Luke dear,” said Emily, to him, one day ; “I know nothing at all of business, but I do know that that kind Horace had no legacy from your father ; surely we are

so rich, you wouldn't miss a sum, which would set him at ease...he cannot have enough to live on. You could allow him something surely ?...didn't he give up some fortune, when we married ?...he has been generous to you...be generous to him!"

The selfish man scarcely knew how to answer this appeal; he coloured and he frowned...he got up from the sofa, where he was sitting, and paced the room.

At last he broke out----

"Emily ; whatever you do, never mention that subject to me again ; I will *not* do anything for Horace ; if he chose to be a fool, it is no reason why I should be one too!"

And with this speech he left his gentle wife, banging the door as he went ; left her to wonder at him and to weep for herself.

With all this new inheritance, Luke Leigh was even more than before anxious for a son and heir. He looked forward to his boy with great, because selfish, delight ; but when his mother tottered into the room

where he was sitting, a month or two after this scene, with the joyful intelligence, that he was the father of a daughter, his only answer to her, was :

“ Oh ! hang the girl !”

## CHAPTER XIII

THERE was quite a scene in the little parlour at Islington when Mrs. White, and Mr. Stock, and Sophy arrived.

Tom had been in a great state of agitation which was not a little increased by the arrival, with them, of James. It was quite a scene when Mr. Stock was introduced. Mrs. White looked foolish; and Mrs. Spildin was highly amused, and Mr. Spildin put on an unnaturally grave politeness, and in the

midst of it looked in a very ridiculous way at his wife ; and Tom, when he had got over seeing Sophy again, was obliged to go out into the passage and laugh ; after which he came back, looking very good and quiet. Certainly, there was no doubt of it, they were an amusing couple to look at ; Mrs. White being very tall and thin, and the excellent butler as remarkably short, stout, and rubicond.

From that day Tom never called them anything but "*the lovers!*" he never could be made to call them aunt and uncle, except when they were within hearing.

James had of course heard the whole account of the disasters and disappointments at High Elms before ; but it was on this evening that Sophy heard with grief and astonishment that upon the Will had depended their marriage. Mr. Leigh was no longer able to perform his promise of providing for James Williams, and therefore all hope of a favorable termination to their

engagement was put off to an indefinite time !

That unfortunate drowsiness of Sophy's had indeed cost them dear...if there had been a Will at all !

After talking over all these sorrowful events, Mr. Stock enquired...

“ What is the profession of young Mr. Tom ?”

Tom, who had never been called “ Mr.” before, was very much gratified at this denomination, and coolly declared...

“ He hadn't made up his mind.”

“ I hav'nt made up mine, he means, gently explained his father.

“ Just as you please,” said Tom, with a meekness which deceived nobody.

“ I've put him as a clerk into a lawyer's office, for the present,” said Mr. Spildin ; “ but what he will eventually take to—I don't know.”

“ Why, sir,” said Tom, putting on an argumentative air ; “ there is so many objections to every thing !”

"Very true," said Mr. Spildin, with an evident acquiescence in Tom's wise observation.

"Very true," said Mr. Stock, who was thinking what it would cost him to buy or hire the Inn, he meant to keep.

"Very true," said Mrs. White, who was thinking it was hardly worth while to get married and give up her money.

Tom felt he had made a sensation, though he didn't know why, but he gloried in it nevertheless.

"If you're a painter," said he ; "that is if you are to be one, you must have a genius for it."

"*That* you must," said the artist with enthusiasm.

"You must love your brush!" said Tom, looking slyly at his mother and imitating his father, in a very undutiful manner. "You must love your brush, as if it was a—baby!" continued Tom, at a loss for a simile.

"Bravo," said Mr. Spildin ; "them are my sentiments."

"I knew they were," said Tom, again glancing at his mother. "One thing," continued he; "prevented my being a painter, I'm not ashamed to own it, but I do not like being laughed at! and so I told—my father."

This audacious hint was lost upon the artist, he was thinking of his own trials in that way and said in a low voice—

"Aye—that's the worst of it."

There were no bounds to Tom's impertinence, although it was often so disguised as not to be discovered by his father.

"And yet," said Mr. Spildin, proudly; "*I* am a painter and I've brought up my sons like gentlemen!—*I* have."

"Very," said Tom; "but then that's what I mean; *you* are a genius."

"True," said his father; "but so are you!"

"Not in your way," said Tom, with an infinity of slyness in the tones of his squeaking but expressive voice.

"In what way is Mr. Tom a genius?" said

Mr. Stock, rather awed by these formidable assertions.

Tom actually blushed and looked down, whilst his father declared, in a tone, half angry, and half proud.

“ Tom is a poet !”

“ Is that a good profession ?” asked the butler.

“ There are objections to it !” answered the genius ; “ one is, you’re never thought enough of; and another is, that it don’t pay.”

“ Ha !” said the butler ; “ *Hum !* ” he did not know what else to say.

“ Then,” continued the tiresome Tom, who was as usual engrossing the whole conversation, as to the law ; “ there are objections...many...first you have to say one thing and think another ! then you have to pretend to care about long stories you *don’t* care about ! and last you have to write all day and make your wrist ache.”

“ Frivolous reasons, sir,” said Mr. Spildin, with great severity.

"Perhaps," said Tom; "especially the first."

"I'm glad you own it, sir," replied his father, perfectly satisfied with the admission.

"Then as to medicine," said Tom. "I wouldn't injure a fellow creature, even for a fee!"

"You've got a good heart," answered his mother; "but though it is dreadfully cruel to cut people up like crimping skate—whilst they are still alive; Doctors do good, and cure one often."

"By great good luck!" answered the imperturbable Tom—"and I'm not lucky, I should do some one a mischief, and I feel that."

"Never do mischief," said little John, in a low voice, lecturing the cat.

And the cat answered—in her way.

The habit of giving moral lectures, had reached down, even to John! it was their family failing.

"Then, Mr. Tom," meekly observed the

butler; "I do not see what profession you would like."

"The army, sir," said Tom, swelling with enthusiasm and standing up at his full height—showing how very short he was. "The army, sir—think of the glory—and the coat!"

No one who looked at Tom, standing up there, displaying to the uttermost, how little and how awkward and how very plain he was; no one could resist a smile at the idea of such a figure—in the army.

"If my father could but buy me a commission," said the ambitious Tom; "I should be the happiest of men."

"Boys, sir—say boys," answered his father angrily; "How can you talk such nonsense about commissions, why don't you ask to be a bishop, or a judge?"

"I should have no objection to be either," replied Tom, sitting down again and meekly clasping his hands together.

"You are always jumping at things above your reach—you'll tumble down some day,"

said Mr. Spildin, shaking his head as he expressed a sentiment which, with all its queer language, is applicable to many people.

All this time, Tom had been gazing upon the little suitor to his old aunt, with feelings of infinite, though silent amusement; he was thinking what he was like—after a good deal of serious consideration, he found out what it was: and gave such a broad smile, that the very person he was smiling at observed :

“ That Mr. Tom must have some very good joke in his head ; it was a pity he didn’t bring it out.”

This Tom gravely and modestly declined, protesting...

“ It would not amuse him.”

The probability was that it would not have amused the little butler.

When the party had broken up and Mrs. Spildin went, with her usual caution, into the kitchen, to see that everything was safe after every one had gone up to bed, she

discovered Tom, playing a melodious accompaniment, to his equally melodious voice. He was playing on a violin, composed of the warmingpan, with a bow, which was, in fact, the poker; and he was squeaking out, in an excellent imitation of the sweet tones of his ingenious instrument, a verse of the popular ballad which he thought most applicable to his future uncle.

'A frog he would a wooing go.'

He rushed to his mother, caught her in his arms, danced her violently round the small kitchen, shrieking with laughter.

He had found out what Mr. Stock was like!

It was a curious, though quite an every day circumstance, that the very Tom who was so acutely alive to the defects of the appearance of his intended uncle—had not the most distant idea that his own personal attractions, were not calculated to adorn the army!

Tom was a man (or boy) of sudden changes ; he was very much of one opinion to day, and very much of another to-morrow; his sudden resolutions were quite spasmodic, and Tom's mother was inclined to believe that this was always the way with geniuses.

He had been so much amused at his aunt and her lover that he really had not thought much of Sophy and *her* lover ; when he began to consider how very glad he had been to see Sophy, and how very glad she had been to see James, he lost his temper altogether, and came down in a ferocious mood, scowling with his light eye brows, giving cutting looks with his keen little eyes, and particularly rude to everybody in general.

" There was a young man once," said Tom with an air of impertinent meaning, " who was engaged to one young woman, but he went and married another after all !"

As nobody took any notice of this, Tom seized the bread, and cut at it in such a violent way that the knife slipped through

the crust and cut him in a very alarming manner.

Sophy screamed, Mrs. Spildin involuntarily covered her eyes with her hands ; Mr. Spildin started up and Mrs. White sat where she was. Sophy alone had presence of mind to tie and cover up the formidable gasp, which she did with her pretty head bent down, and her light fingers busy with the injured hand.

“ Does it hurt you much, dear Tom,” enquired she in a kind voice.

“ Horrid,” said Tom, “ but I’ll cut the other one at once Sophy...if you’ll tie it up.”

To this interesting piece of self devotion Sophy answered with a laugh.

At which Tom ground his teeth and vowed “ *He* didn’t see the joke.”

But the next day Tom brought the injured hand to Sophy. He had cut himself *again!*

“ I don’t think Sophy is so wonderfully happy after all,” said Tom in confidence to his mother, “ she doesn’t seem to me to be in spirits.”

"Perhaps not," replied Mrs. Spildin, "poor young things."

"Anything the matter?" enquired Tom in an eager tone.

"They can't be married yet," said Mrs. Spildin, "perhaps not for years, and long engagements..."

"Get broke!" said or rather shouted Tom. "Get broke, they do, hurray!" and he seized the first thing which he could put his hand on, which happened to be the hearth brush and waved it round his head as an accompaniment to a deafening series...of cheers: no less than three times three."

"Tom!" said his mother, "law, Tom, pray Tom, don't Tom."

But Tom began or rather went on cheering at his mother in such a ridiculous way that she was obliged to give it up and laugh.

But Tom by that time was in a state of thought and gravity so profound that she became frightened, and again the idea came across her mind that he must be going mad!

"Mother," said he, "how long do you

think it will be before they can be married —if they ever are!"

"Five years, or ten," said his mother shaking her head in a melancholy way, "it is quite impossible to say...if Sophy hadn't gone to sleep that night...Mr. Leigh would have had his own, and everything would have been right."

"It was a lucky nap of Sophy's!" said Tom.

"*Lucky?*" said his mother, "oh very lucky for everybody!"

"No!" replied Tom, "it was bad enough for everybody; but mother dear," and here he approached her, put his ugly but still not mean or common face down to hers and whispered in her ear, "it may be a lucky nap...for me!"

"How my dear boy, what possible good can it do you?"

"Long engagements," said Tom, "no go...people get tired; I dare say *I* should get tired if I was engaged to Sophy for years...there's no knowing, and mother...as I'm

always here, and James is not; now don't you think that I could cut that fellow out."

People in love must have a confidante, that is an established fact...you can't go to any theatre and hear any play without being convinced of the truth of it, as Mr. Spildin would say.

"It is proved, there isn't no use in arguing of it out."

Tom had a friend, a bosom friend, in whose listening ear he had long poured out his feelings and his verses, and if there is an act of friendship more deserving of reward than another in this world of ours, it is listening to verses! Jones *was* a friend, he seemed to be all ears; but Jones unluckily had his professional engagements, and his ears were not to be attained at all times—Sundays, in general, were the only days on which Tom had the solace of haranguing the admiring, and indeed, opened mouthed Jones, and there were intervals between those days so few and far between when Tom had things to

say and no one to say them to—verses to declaim and no one who would hear them !

This painful state of things became at last unbearable, and when the worst comes to the worst it generally mends. So to the mind of Tom, or rather to his genius, came the idea of a new confidant, one who would listen even upon week and working days, one who in short *must* listen ! this was no other than the unlucky little John, and from that hour he had the post of listener in ordinary, and truly in extraordinary too—poor little John !—he had to sit and hear all about Sophy ; but he didn't mind that, he too was very fond of Sophy ; and in the dim state of his ideas he didn't at all wonder at Tom's being so fond of her ; but what he did *not* like, was to sit or stand, or walk as the case might be, and listen to those verses—not one single word of which he understood, or, if the whole truth must be spoken, was ever likely to understand !—Jones himself never did. Walking out with Tom to listen

was the worst for them, *his* consolation and *his* comfort, and indeed, *his* listener was not there, the cat was left at home—his life would have become a burden to him without his cat—poor little John !

And on this morning, when the new idea and the new hope had sprung up fresh and strong, Tom went to find his listener, and John, having an undefined idea he should be wanted, had hidden himself.

After some search, he was discovered by the determined Tom, ensconced with his four-footed friend, within the shades of the paternal coal cellar.

Dragged by one ear in the most ignominious manner, John was obliged to mount into their little bedroom—the torture room he felt it had become—although he did not know the use of such a phrase—he had to sit down and listen, poor little boy !

Tom was in an agitated state of mind and body ; so he walked up and down, a feat as nearly impossible as it could well be...he

looked better in his own room than any where else...it was so small a room...*he* didn't look small.

And so he talked, continually asking his brother...

“ Don't you think *so* ? ”

To which John dared not, for his life, say anything but...

“ Yes.”

“ You're sure of it,” said Tom.

“ Quite sure,” said John.

John, quite as acquiescent as the cat herself could have been, had better means of expressing it, so there they sat. Tom talking and gesticulating wildly.

John sitting bolt upright looking at Tom, and the cat sitting bolt upright looking at John.

In the language of the head of the house of Spildin...

“ That cat was *more* than one of the family she was ! ”

At last poor little John got very tired, it

was a sad state of things for him, he would have given all he had—which was three farthings—for a good yawn, and dared not make even a slight attempt at one.

“ And don’t you think,” said Tom; “ it is a splendid thing for me that their engagement is so long—eh? don’t you think so ?”

“ Yes,” answered John, not having the most remote idea what he could mean.

“ A lucky thing that I am here always with Sophy ?”

“ Oh yes !” said John, who fully understood him then ; “ I like that too !”

“ Oh hang your likings!” answered Tom, proposing that impossibility as if it were the easiest thing in the world.

“ Just as you please,” said John; “ if you wish it Tom, *it must be so.*”

And Tom, indignant at his talking in this unheard of way, gave him a slight knock on the head, not quite enough to hurt—but more than enough to silence him.

“ And don’t you think,” said Tom ; “ that

with all this, I *must* be able to cut that fellow out—why don't you answer, sir?"

"Oh dear," said John, rubbing his head.

"Answer me directly—don't you think I can, shall, could, should, and *must* cut that fellow out."

"*Yes,*" replied John, bursting into a cry, that fear itself could not suppress a moment longer.

And Tom fully satisfied with this opinion! turned him out of the room; and joyfully going down stairs, John ran to his stool, and taking the cat up, on his lap...cried over her, kissing her sleek head, and letting the big tears fall upon her glossy coat...sobbing as if his heart would break...and then making a confidante and listener of her, he said with his curly head bent down on hers :

"Puss...puss...if it wasn't for you, I couldn't bear it...oh! I couldn't. Tom did hurt me so, he did...oh puss!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Horace Leigh entered the drawing-room, where Blanche was waiting to receive him, after he had been deprived of the hand of the woman he loved, by the innocent and well-meaning Fred, he was humiliated—crushed; but when he entered that well known room, after he left the home that should have been his for life, and left it in so strange and unexpected a manner, almost a beggar, his noble looking head was raised in his old frank way, and his fine

countenance, though grave, had a prouder and more dignified expression ; he seemed above his evil fortune.

One thing which made the friendliness of Blanche to Horace Leigh so precious to him, was her quick and sure perception of all the changes of his sensitive nature, and now she saw, with the first glance at his altered mein, how utterly misplaced would be all the tender sympathies, which had comforted him so much in his last disappointment : and with a woman's tact and self-control, she came forward to meet him in a manner frank as his own ;—hiding her own great disappointment, because he showed so little.

He felt this answering to his feelings now, more than he had ever done before ; yet it was nothing new.

“ It is not so hard to bear after all,” said Horace, “ nothing to *that*,” and a bitter expression passed over his face.

Blanche could say nothing ; she could only look at him with those calm, deepset eyes of her, and listen.

After a moment he went on, unburdening his mind of all the troublesome feelings he never showed except to her.

"The uncertainty was terrible, *I did* feel that," said Horace; "to me there is nothing so painful as a state of doubt; there is no such relief dear Blanche as knowing even... the worst. I know it now, the combat and the struggle of conflicting feelings is over the uncertainty is no more, my way is clear, it may, it must be, narrow and thorny, Blanche, steep and hard to tread, but still my way *is* clear before me...I have made up my mind."

The magnitude of the change in Horace Leigh's position seemed to paralyse his cousin, she literally could not speak...and fortunately he did not observe it, he was willing and able to speak himself.

"You know of old how difficult I have found it...to make up my mind...could I have done so in that other great trial of my life, how different would have been the face

of things...you know even in trifles, how painful it always was to me to decide...it is a weakness...a sad and womanly weakness, Blanche...but I have an unfortunate power of seeing both sides of a question."

"That is generally considered a proof of a just and discriminating intellect," said Blanche.

"Is it?" said Horace; "I find it very inconvenient! I often envy those who seeing things only in one way, and that their own way, Blanche, are spared all my troublesome doubts and anxious weighings in the balance. Hitherto there has been uncertainty in my lot in life; I lost one source of happiness by my own fault—another in this most strange way—by my aunt Vernon's fault, I scarcely can believe it to have been—and yet it was! now Blanche I have *no more to lose!*"

He did not think of *her*; and she turned pale and, do what she would, tears—for herself—came into her calm eyes. He did not think of *her*!

"Fortune and love—both gone," said Horace; "both gone for ever."

Blanche recovered herself, with a great effort and replied...

"Fortune may be regained in some degree."

"True I can work and *will*," said Horace ; "but think Blanche, just think of a whole life, a long, dark life; life without love."

"It is no uncommon fate," said Blanche, in a low, strange voice, "thousands are never loved---go through existence loving and unloved."

There was a something in her voice which made Horace look up at her, but she sat there, calm and pale—and with no trace of any new or strange emotion on her quiet face.

"I have one comfort in *this* grief," said Horace ; "every thing is for the best."

And Blanche looked up in great surprise at this sentiment from her cousin's lips.

“I am too thankful she is not my wife,  
*as I am now.*”

Horace got up and paced the room, then he came back and brought his chair nearer to Blanche and said—

“The poison is gone from that first wound—dear Blanche, the second loss has cured the first. I am *glad* Isabelle is not my wife—she will not share my poverty—she will not share my struggles, she will not feel the disappointments that must wait on my future course, she will be happier than I could have made her. One trial, Blanche, has neutralized the other.”

“That is indeed a mercy,” said poor Blanche, with her head bowed down upon her hands.

“And now,” continued Horace, “I stand alone; I must be everything to myself.”

Again Blanche felt he had forgotten *her*.

“The career that I shall enter on, is one in which there is scarcely a hope of doing anything; so many fail for one that may

succeed; yet I am glad I did not waste my time when I was rich---*in expectation!* Blanche."

" You will succeed," replied his cousin with her whole face lighted up, " I see it in your changed and more decided manner Horace, you are *resolved*--you have learnt to be that in your adversity."

" It may avail me little, Blanche, or much; but you are right to say that I am changed...there is nothing left of my old nature, Blanche."

She looked at him, and she believed his words; a little while ago, when he loved another—he still would not have forgotten *her*.

" I trusted human nature, Blanche ; I loved and trusted woman's nature most ; how have I been deceived!—The pages of life that have been opened to me of late!—have taught me many a bitter lesson—Who would not have thought *she* loved me—yet she married him...Who would not have thought aunt Vernon loved me—yet she

deceived me too—I have no trust from this day forth in man or woman, Blanche---” Here he looked up and caught her eyes—his friend’s...his true, unchanging friend’s sorrowful gaze recalled him from this mood “no trust in any human heart—but yours,” he took her hand, he pressed it to his lips for the first time in his life ; but Horace had remembered her *too late*---the iron had entered into her soul.

She sat there still and passive as a statue, her cup of sorrow was full, her friendship had become a wreck in the fierce storm of sorrows which had assailed her cousin.

And from that day nothing that Horace could say or do---no confidence---no words could ever make her think he cared for her again—she was, with all her patient listening, with all her watchful sympathy, with all her self-denial, with all her depth of true and most disinterested friendship...nothing to him...he had forgotten, more than once, her very existence, and she said over and over to herself for months...and years :

" He did not think of *me*."

And yet he did, far more than he had ever done; she was his only comfort and his only friend, the *one* who had never deceived or disappointed him...she did not dream of this.

The fate of Horace Leigh was indeed a sad one...his was not a nature that could care for many ; but he devoted himself entirely to the few he loved...and what a list it was.

His father never loved or appreciated him, his mother still clung in her strange preference to Luke. And Luke ! what a brother he had been and *was*. The brows of Horace Leigh were contracted, and his eyes flashed there as he sat in the chambers Fred thought so comfortless, for they were now his only home ; his eyes flashed as he sat, at the remembrance of Luke's conversation after he was acknowledged master of High Elms...the want of feeling, of brotherly kindness, of common generosity, or common regard to the decencies observed by the living to the dead

...all these came to his mind in the most vivid colours...what a brother he had in Luke.

And Isabelle ?---he would not think of her she was dead to him---it was no fault of hers, she could not help herself---she was a woman ---“ All women feigned and all deceived !” he never could love woman more---always excepting that dear, noble Blanche.

And Fred ? whom he had loved as a father loves his son; the child of his affections, Fred, whom he had taught and helped, and loved---Fred too was lost to him.

There was such bitterness in all this retrospect !---yet Fred had not deceived him, the one great disappointment of his life had been the act of his aunt Vernon, who could he ever trust again ?—leading him on as she had done, blinding him by such false hopes that he had given up the substance for the shadow ! what a strange fate was his.

But he stood up firm and upright at last, against this tide of evil fortune, and he bent his shoulder to the wheel.

One year past by, he worked and worked, by day and night he toiled ; heaping up legal knowledge in his clear mind...living a solitary life at times, whenever he could do it—discouraging all idle friends, all gay acquaintances, going out nowhere except to the Trevor's house ; and that not often as he had done—working—and gaining nothing. But that one year of fruitless toil had changed him much ; his mind imbibed a tone of bitterness...his words, his thoughts were bitter ...one bright spot alone lighted the waste of his crushed heart, it was the name of Blanche.

But Blanche said over to herself in bitterness as great as his.

“ He did not think of *me*, he has lost every one he cares for ? and he *told me so !* ”

Then Horace, as he sat leaning his idle head upon his idle hands, a most rare attitude for him, went back from Blanche to his first miserable train of thought.

He would give up his chambers—he would see about that to-morrow, what was the use

of keeping them, he never now should make enough...*to marry on!*

What could make him think of that, when Isabelle was already married.

It would come into his head however, do what he would, if he turned it out it came back again—it *would*.

What was the earthly use of all his study he had no business! *none*.

His was no uncommon case, more than one of his fellow barristers was in the same predicament! he knew that well enough, but they had not worked as he had, they had not had such a long series of misfortunes.

He would write that moment and give notice to quit his useless, absurdly useless chambers.

He wrote the note, and was about to seal it when James Williams his clerk announced a visitor by a name totally unknown to Horace.

And yet he thought he knew the face; somewhere he had seen those sagacious

looking eyes, fixed on him...he remembered them...but where or when, or how long ago, he could not possibly recollect.

There was a pleasant smile upon the countenance of the old man, who now announced himself as Mr. Toulmin and recalled to the memory of Horace their short and wordless interview.

"Our mutual friend Mr. —— has just taken another step in the ladder," said the attorney, "and is no longer able to transact my business; I am come to you to ask for an opinion."

With all the habitual self-possession of Horace he was so very profoundly astonished at this, that he violated all rules of decorum by not only showing it, but by very nearly expressing it!

Mr. Toulmin was highly amused by that, but kept the same grave business-like demeanour.

"I am assured by Mr. ——," continued the friendly solicitor, "that he has the very highest opinion of your professional abilities,

and I am come to put into your hands, some grave and important interests. Your father did me a service once, and I am happy to have it in my power to make the acquaintance of his son."

He ended by giving Horace his *first brief!* but not by any means his last. The immense practice, of the best kind, in which Mr. Toulmin and his partners were engaged, enabled him to do Horace real and important service.

But the greatest that he rendered him was this; the deep despondency of the young barrister's mind departed for ever; he felt his power; he felt that he was rising...that he was really on the way to eminence; his ambition was aroused, his hopes were high, and Horace once more and after all...the unlucky Horace Leigh was happy.

He did not send the note he had written ...giving up his chambers!

A year past by ; two years and more since Mrs. Vernon died, and Horace was still prospering in his profession, but he was a

solitary man...he had no friend...no friend but Blanche.

One day he had walked off with his old buoyant step to call in Grosvenor Square... and Mrs. Trevor called him to her in the dining-room. Whatever she might have told him, it was bad news to him, judging by the expression of his face as he went up the stairs to have "a conference" with his cousin.

He could not say at once *that*, which he had to say to her ; there was, all over his sad countenance a deep red flush, and strange enough, the calm and quiet Blanche was agitated too—she hardly rose to welcome him ; she never once looked up.

They had so much to say, that they began upon indifferent subjects !

"I have a letter, Blanche, from Frederick Keane."

"Indeed," said Blanche.

"The affairs of Sir Josiah are still in a strange state, as Mr. Simmons is nowhere to be heard of: and with him it is supposed are some important papers ; the liabilities of

Sir Josiah are doubtful—but his losses—certain."

"Did Fred say that?" asked Blanche, with just the ghost of a faint smile.

"Not in those words," said Horace Leigh and he too smiled at Fred's odd and indefinite sentences, which they both knew so well.

"Tidings of Isabelle," continued he, speaking of anything rather than that which filled his cousin's thoughts and his. "Tidings of Isabelle! how those words would have affected me two years ago! but *now*. I care for Fred; still care for him, but Isabelle? how easily one can recover from disappointed love!"

"Strange doctrine from your lips," said Blanche, "but true; *most true*," perhaps she spoke from personal experience, there was so much of earnestness in her soft voice.

"The Kanes are coming home," said Horace Leigh, "and I am glad to hear it!"

"And other friends are coming back to England too," said Blanche; almost afraid

to mention the forbidden name. "The Forresters arrived last night."

"Ha!" answered Horace Leigh, with one of those sharp pangs, conscience *will* give, at times. "So much of news to-day, all bringing pain to me."

"Not all, I hope," said Blanche in a low, trembling tone, and with a vivid blush.

*That* is the worst of all, you know it must be so...to me. Just think a moment Blanche, just think what you have been! a counsellor, a friend, a most dear monitor—think! you have been my comforter for years; in all my bitter disappointments, Blanche, and they were such as few experience; what would have become of me without you?"

His voice so low and full of feeling, and his dark, earnest eyes met hers with such a look of grief, that every chord of her life-long affection vibrated. But he went on, giving her no time to speak.

"Think what you were to me through all my bitter days...think what you are now at this moment Blanche, and ask me if you can

...if it is painful to me now, to lose...the only friend I have."

" You will not lose me Horace, I can be all that I have ever been."

" No, no!" said he impatiently, " not so, you will have other ties nearer and dearer...you will be lost to me! Well, I have suffered much, I thought my cup was full. I might have thought of this, expected it; but I did not; life has yet one more bitter drop---dear Blanche I ask you, who can fill your place---to me ?"

" I did not dream that you would care," said Blanche, " you said long---long ago, that you had lost *all* that you cared for; if---if---you feel it thus---I shall begin to think the future dearly purchased Horace---if I lose you."

" Pardon my selfishness," said Horace Leigh, " I should congratulate---I cannot Blanche, all that I lose is still too vividly before me---in whom can I place confidence."

" In me, why not in me," said Blanche.

" Because a friend---married, is a friend

lost---the sacredness of confidence is gone. I wish you happy, with my whole heart I wish you happy in your choice, but I must feel it Blanche, and *do* bitterly feel this sudden change."

"You might have seen," whispered poor Blanche.

"*The only friend I have!*" said Horace Leigh in such a tone that Blanche burst into tears.

He looked at her just for a moment and without another word he left the room.

Horace walked with a vehement manner and a violent speed, through some of the busy streets of London ; this was so totally unexpected, this last of his losses !

He had started that day in such high spirits, meaning to tell her how happy he was now---longing for the hour when he should see her once more, glad because he was glad, and the hour was past, and what had it brought to him ?

He was older and sadder now, less able to meet a trial.

The failing of his family had cost him two dear friends...the new can never fill the places of the old...and he knew well that if he had not by his impatient words cooled the warm feelings of poor Fred, he never would have married Isabelle; and he knew better still, that if, in bye-gone times, he had but kept his temper, Stephen Forrester would have been at his side in all his bitter days!

And she who *had* been near him was lost too; "for Blanche was going to be married."

Those words rang in his ears...forcing themselves on his attention in the solitude of his chambers, till he felt he could bear their silence and loneliness no longer...those words could not ring in his ears amidst the busy sounds of London ; and he determined to go out and by physical fatigue to numb if possible the anguish of his mind.

He seized his hat...and looking wild and haggard...opened the outer door of his rooms.

He found himself face to face with a

stranger who was about to seek admittance.

He was a young man of a very distinguished, and rather foreign air and manner, but he seemed under the influence of some strong emotion.

Horace looked at him carelessly ; for he was still suffering from his own thoughts.

The stranger did not look up at him, but asked :

“ If Mr. Leigh was then at home ?”

“ I am Mr. Leigh,” said Horace, “ will you come in ?” and he retired to let the gentleman on business, evidently of some importance, and from his manner doubtless of painful interest, pass on into his chambers.

They walked on in silence.

“ Will you sit down ?” said Horace, who had scarcely yet glanced at the stranger, he was so occupied in calming his late emotion down.

And all this every-day, conventional politeness went on, though both young men were struggling with painful feelings.

But instead of any other answer the stranger put out his hand to Horace, and said in a voice he recognized at last :

“ Horace let us be friends again !”

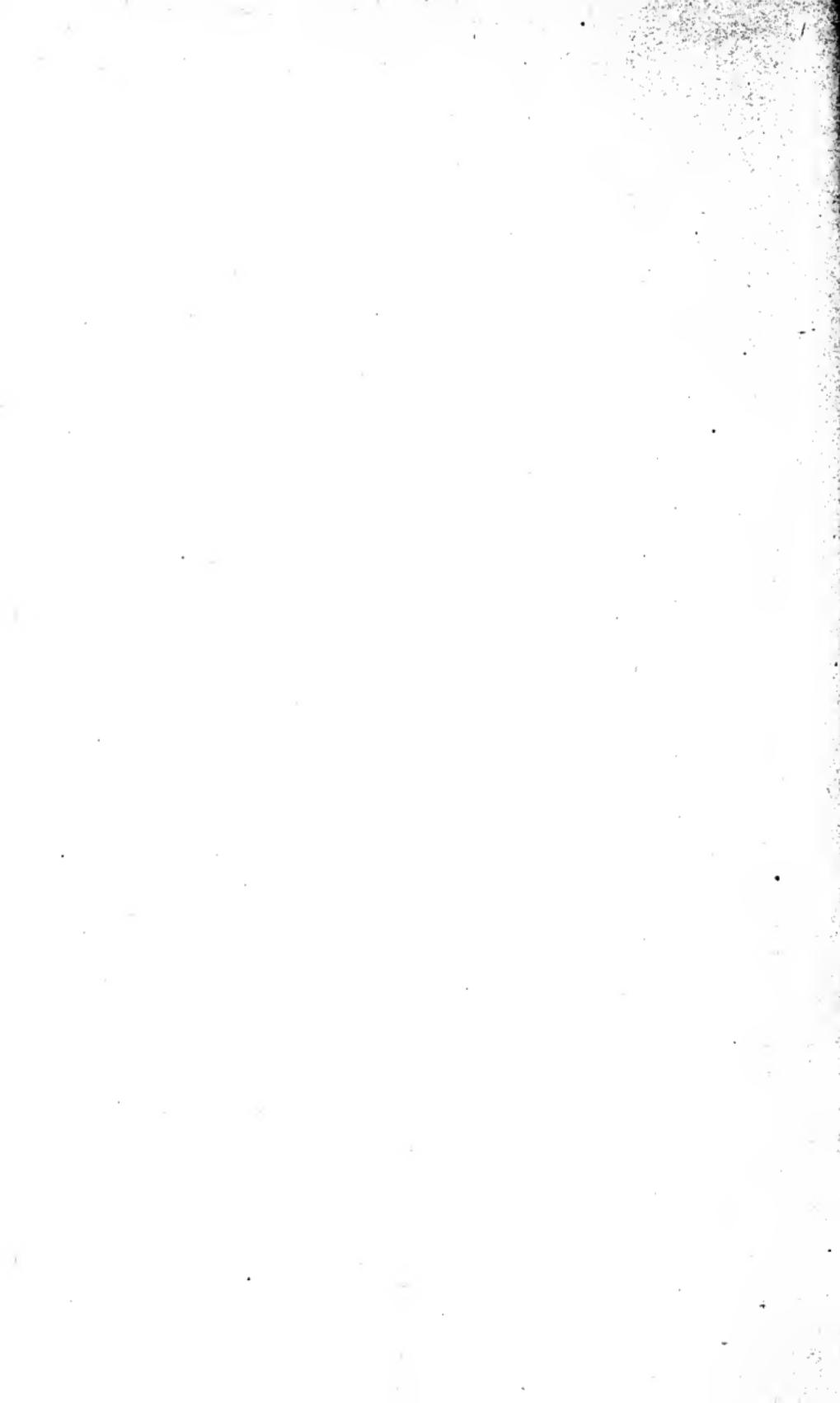
It was no other than his lost friend Stephen Forrester...returned in his hour of need !

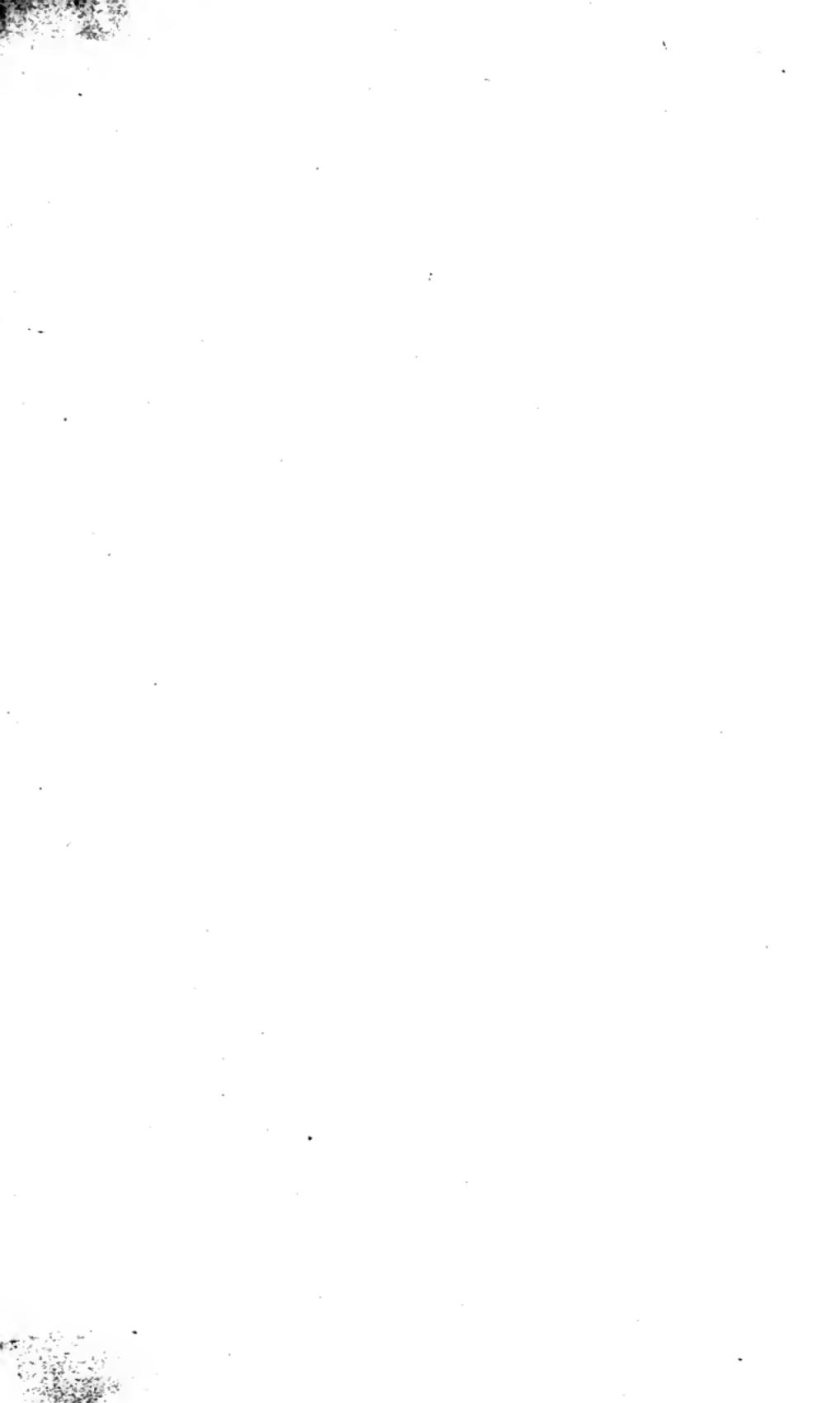
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